

LITERATURE  
IDEALS OF WOMANHOOD IN THE ~~PROSE AND DRAMA~~ OF  
FINLAND AND RUSSIA 1894-1914

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## ABSTRACT

This study is a literary critical examination of the portrayal of woman in prose and drama, with reference to the themes of political and artistic rebirth which preoccupied writers in Finland and Russia at the turn of the century.

The study falls into three sections, each of which represents an aspect of woman's metaphysical condition and for which I have used the categories *Action*, *Voice*, and *Visibility*. The first section assesses writers' approach to the issues raised by the woman question, and describes the cultivation of an ideal of politically active, nationally loyal womanhood in the image of the Madonna. The second section demonstrates that woman's silence, a dominant feature of her characterization, signifies both the danger of revolution and the prescription for her social integration. It also includes an analysis of the opportunities and consequences of self-expression for female characters and writers. The third section deals with the view of woman as an embodiment of artistic impulse, especially her idealization as muse, and addresses the issue of pornography in the representation of the female form.

The comparison between the two literatures explores the respective national ambitions as well as the concept of the 'new woman'. The image of woman is influenced by contemporary theory of her nature and social function. The literatures contrast most notably in the relationship of the Madonna-like saviour to the political hero, and of the muse to the artist. In Russia, the historic mission of nation and artist is imbued with universal and eternal significance. In Finland, it relates to the immediate, localized ambitions of national self-determination. Woman is shown to have a central place in both countries in the process of political and artistic renewal. However, the ideal of womanhood plays upon preconceptions of femininity which preclude the notion of woman's equality and independence at the root of feminist thought. The limitations on woman's existence are observable in the elements of silence and pornography which affect her characterization, erasing her subjective identity and promoting her objectification.





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*Motto:*

The following is taken from Carl G. Laurin, *Kvinnolynnen* ('Female Natures'), Stockholm, 1916<sup>1</sup>:

Generalization often leads us astray, but there is nevertheless due cause for saying that Eastern women are less emancipated than Western women.(...)

Russia, the Balkan lands and Spain form a passageway to the Occident and to a certain extent they already represent Western countries.(...)

What is woman in Russia like? Aside from the women of the three great cultural nations, surely there is none so well known in the cultural circles of Europe as Russian woman. For, with the most penetrating psychology and the most artistic narrative skill, the great Russian writers have depicted her in all her nuances.(...) The oriental feature of Russian women is their indolence, or to put it more politely, passivity, punctuated by the passionate activity which is unleashed in dancing or carriage drives and horseriding, and indeed the more furious the tempo the better.(...) The essence of Slavic woman is perhaps her inclination for martyrdom, sometimes with a hint of the perversity which characterizes every possible aspect of Russian culture and refinement. Cruelty and subjection are its two sides. The women may most often incline to the latter. A naïve expression of this is the Russian peasant woman's sorrowful: 'My husband does not love me any more. He never beats me these days.'(...)

The old saying about the two identical yet dissimilar portraits can also be applied to Russian woman. Impetuous and adroit, or rather if you will, quick-tempered and deceitful, she is ruthless in love and genuinely feminine, or rather if you will, exceptionally wanton, the plaything of her own emotions and sensuality. In Russia, women also possess that Slavic tendency to take

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<sup>1</sup> The first paragraph appears on the facing page of the title page, the rest on pp.17-23.



everything to extremes. Thus, if she is a woman's rights campaigner she adopts so fundamental an attitude that only the absence of a full beard distinguishes her from the hated male. If she is a society lady, there exists no nail-file, no exclusive lipstick which she will fail to obtain for herself. Then again, if she is one of the natural types, of which there are so many in Russia, in novels as well as in life, she commands such irresistible charm, such spontaneous friendliness, such tact and such an agile intellect, that in order not to commit an injustice to the rest of the women in Europe, it must be remembered that there is a high percentage of ugly, plump, pasty and unwholesome types in Russia, although no adequate statistics are available on the matter. Evidence of the high esteem in which the feminine, with all its radiant and secret attraction, is held in holy Russia, is the richness of the language on this subject. I heard a Swedish-speaking Finn who had spent many years in Russia as an officer say: 'I still speak Swedish better than I speak Russian, but when my Swedish-speaking friends and I address the woman question, so much more colour and spice is added to the conversation if we resort to Russian.'

\* \* \*

And what is woman like in Finland? That I do not know. The Swedes generally forget entirely that the majority of the population - 86% - is Mongol, or if you will, Uralic-Altaic. Most Finnish women, however, would appear in their facial features to resemble their racial kinswomen, the Lapps, rather than the Hungarians, who are perhaps more linguistically than biologically related, and who are themselves frequently exceptionally beautiful. It is not presumptuous to believe that the Swedish influence introduced by Saint Erik, lasting until Gustav IV Adolf, and perhaps even until Gustav V, left something of the Swedish stamp on the Finland-Swedish women of the upper classes. The contrast of a sort of sullen gaucherie among some individuals, and an aristocratic self-assurance and grandeur among others, also



exists in Finland. The latter undoubtedly stems from Gustavian court tradition, and is consequently a relic of grandeur. A degree of the Russian tendency towards excess may also have penetrated the mould, despite tenacious resistance, with the result that both the emancipationists and the *femmes du monde* in Finland, a country struggling valiantly to maintain its status of autonomy, have achieved somewhat greater equality than their sisters in Sweden, who are so moderate in all respects.

Finnish woman. Singer, Mrs Aino Ackté. Painting by Albert Edelfelt. When Finnish women are elegant, they have a more worldly, a more continental flair than our cautious Swedish counterparts. She combines - this beautiful, world-famous singer - the dream of Suomi with an absolutely impeccable Parisian toilette. In her portrait she is quite simply extraordinarily well formed. Which does she prefer? The thundering applause or the murmur of the fir trees?

Generaliserandet för oss ofta galet, men nog har man väl rätt att säga, att österlandskorna äro mindre emanciperade än västerlandskorna.(...)

Ryssland, Balkanländerna och Spanien bilda övergången till Occidenten och äro redan till en viss grad västerland.(...)

Hur är kvinnan i Ryssland? Helt säkert finnes utom de tre stora kulturländernas kvinnor ingen, som är så noga känd i den europeiska kulturkretsen som ryskan. Ty med skarpaste psykologi, med den mest konstnärliga berättarkonst har hon skildrats i all sina nyanser av de stora ryska författarna.(...) Det orientaliska hos ryskorna är lättja, hövligare uttryckt passivitet, avbruten av lidelsefull aktivitet, som utlöser sig i dans eller åkande och ridande i ju våldsammare tempo dess bättre.(...) Roten i det slaviska är kanske martyrlynnnet, ibland med ett stänk av den perversitet, som på alla möjliga områden är för rysk kultur och överkultur karakteristisk. Grymhet och underkastelse äro de två sidorna. Kvinnorna få väl oftast dröja vid den senare. Ett naivt uttryck för detta är den ryska bondhustruns sorgsna: "Min man älskar mig inte längre. Han slår mig aldrig nu för tiden."(...)

Det gamla ordet om de två lika, sinsemellan olika porträtten kan också tillämpas på ryskan. Impulsiv och smidig, eller om man hellre vill häftig och lögnaktig, hänsynslös i sin kärlek och äkta kvinnlig, eller om man hellre vill kalla det ovanligt lättsinnig, en lekboll för sin känsla och sin sinnlighet. I Ryssland har också kvinnan den slaviska lusten att dra ut konsekvenserna. Är hon kvinnoaksksvinna, tar hon det så grundligt, att endast hakans helskägg fattas för att hon skulle likna den hatade mannen. Är hon modedam, så finnes det ej den nagelfil, ej det mest svåråtkomliga läppsmink, som hon ej skaffar sig, och är hon åter av den naturliga sorten, som det finnes så många av i Ryssland, både i romanerna och i livet, så har hon en så oemotståndlig charm, en sådan spontan vänlighet, takt och rörlig intelligens, att man för att ej bli orättvis mot Europas andra damer måste komma ihåg, att procenthalten av fula, rultiga, blekfeta och



osunda typer är betydande i Ryssland, ehuru någon tillfredsställande statistik ännu ej åvägabragts. Ett av bevisen på hur högt kvinnligheten i alla sina strålande och hemliga behagligheter uppskattas i det heliga Ryssland, är språkets rikedom på detta område. Jag hörde en svensktalande finne, som i årtal vistats i Ryssland som officer, säga: "Jag talar ännu så länge bättre svenska än ryska, men då jag och mina svensktalande kamrater beröra kvinnosaken, så blir det mera färg och must i samtalet, då vi ta till med ryska."

\* \* \*

Hurudan är kvinnan i Finland? Det vet jag inte. Att flertalet - 86% av befolkningen - är mongolisk, eller om man hellre vill uralaltaisk, gömma svenska i allmänhet bort. De flesta finska kvinnor torde emellertid till ansiktsdragen mera likna sina rasfränkor lappskorna än de kanske mera språkligt än biologiskt med dem besläktade ofta så utmärkt vackra ungerskorna. Det är ej övermodigt att tro, att det svenska inflytandet från och med Erik den helig till och med Gustav IV Adolf, ja kanske ända till Gustav V, tryckt något av svensk stämpel på de svenskfindländska överklasskvinnorna. Motsatsen mellan någon sorts trumpen tafatthet hos vissa individer och aristokratisk säkerhet och förbindlighet hos andra är även finsk. Det senare härrör nog gustavianska hovtraditioner, en relikförbindlighet således. Må nu inte också en viss rysk överdrift ha silat in, trots allt segt motstånd, så att både emancipationskvinnor och världsdamer i det för sin relativa oavhängighet segt och beundransvärt kämpande Finland få något mer outrerat jämfört med de i alla avseenden så sansade svenskorna.

Finska. Sångerskan, fru Aino Ackté. Målning av Albert Edelfelt. Då finska äro eleganta, ha de ett mera mondänt, mera kontinentalt drag än våra försiktiga svenskor. - Hon förbinder - den vackra, världsberömda sångerskan - drömmen från Suomi

med en alldeles felfri parisisk toalett. Hon är på bilden helt enkelt alldeles utomordenligt väl formad. Vad tycker hon bäst om, applådåskor eller gransus?

## 0 INTRODUCTION

### 0.1 Methodological Approaches to the Study of Female Imagery

Eve, Isis, Ishtar represent just a few of the iconic figures of woman that have been sustained by the human imagination. The symbolic characterization of the female being is a subject which has attracted the attention of scholars of cultural philosophy within a wide range of disciplines. These include history, theology, sociology and psychology among others. Among the recent works on this subject are Marina Warner's exhaustive studies of the myth of the Virgin Mary, Antonia Fraser's detailed look at the fact and fiction in the story of Boadicea, Helen King's article on the ancient cult surrounding the goddess Artemis, and Elaine Showalter's examination of Ophelia as a model of female madness.<sup>2</sup> Such images range from the subjects of ancient myth to figures in more modern culture. The purpose of these studies is to gain an understanding into the role played by these female icons in the communities which fostered their imagery, and to examine their significance for present-day society.

Not all studies of female imagery focus on a specific figure from myth or history. Alternatively, they present the composite view of woman, derived from the various aspects of a presumed, essential feminine quality which may be evoked in the symbolism of specific figures, but which also appears as a principle behind the very understanding of the word 'woman'. Writers like Mary Daly have offered an interpretation of general models of female behaviour in Christian philosophy, while Andrea Dworkin, for example, has explored the image of female sexuality cultivated in various forms of 'erotica'.<sup>3</sup>

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2 Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary*, London, 1976; Antonia Fraser, *Boadicea's Chariot: The Warrior Queens*, London, 1988; Helen King, 'Bound to Bleed: Artemis and Greek Women' in Averil Cameron and Amélie Khurt, eds, *Images of Women in Antiquity*, London, 1983, pp.109-27; Elaine Showalter, 'Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of a Feminist Criticism' (*Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, 1985, pp.77-94).

3 Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, Boston, 1973; Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, London, 1981.



Many collections of essays and articles have been published under titles such as *Perceiving Women*, *Visions of Women*, *Images of Women in Antiquity*, which investigate precisely the subject indicated by the titles.<sup>4</sup> They cover a vast range of subjects, from theories of the feminine in philosophical inquiry to the pictures of women on ancient Greek vases.

The range and quantity of works of this kind demonstrate that the desire to develop an understanding of the origins and consequences of cultural models of womanhood is a multi-disciplinary, fertile area of metaphysical investigation. With regard to literature in particular, the interpretation of female imagery in fictional writing has come to fall into the category of 'feminist literary criticism'. Alongside the 'rediscovery' and analysis of the work of women writers, the study of how women are portrayed, particularly by male writers, has been recognized as one of the two major methodological lines of applied feminist criticism.<sup>5</sup> Toril Moi describes this as 'the "Images of Women" approach to literature' in her book *Sexual / Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*, a comprehensive account of the field in Western tradition.<sup>6</sup> As Moi points out, Mary Ellman's *Thinking About Women*, published in 1968, is one of the first key works in the modern wave of Anglo-American feminism to take up the approach of unmasking female stereotypes in literature. Moi dates the consolidation of this approach from 1972 with the publication of the collection of critical writings *Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives* edited by Susan Koppelman Cornillon.<sup>7</sup> The particular, feminist line followed in these articles is, according to Moi, the emphasis on the discrepancies between the portrait of woman projected in fiction and the reality of woman's experience.

However, the use of the 'Images of Women' approach to literature is not necessarily feminist in every instance, while any other

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4 Shirley Ardener, ed., *Perceiving Women*, London, 1975; Linda A. Bell, *Visions of Women: Being a Fascinating Anthology With Analysis of Philosophers' Views of Women From Ancient to Modern Times*, Clifton, 1983; Cameron and Khurt, eds, *op.cit.*

5 Annette Kolodny, 'Dancing through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism' (*Feminist Studies*, Vol.6, no.1, 1980, p.3); or Gabriela Mora and Karen S. van Hooft, eds, *Theory and Practice of Feminist Literary Criticism*, Ypsilanti, 1982, p.viii. By 'applied' I mean the practice rather than the theory; another major line of feminist criticism involves defining its literary and political methods and aims.

6 Toril Moi, *Sexual / Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*, London, 1985, p.42.

7 *ibid.*, p.42.



approach may of course also be feminist. Khalid Kishtainy's book *The Prostitute in Progressive Literature* makes no overt statement of its feminist viewpoint.<sup>8</sup> It presents a broad, literary study of the physical and psychological attributes of the prostitute as a type, as well as of this type's contextual function, in the works of writers from Dostoevskii to Brecht. Menachem M. Brayer's two volume work *The Jewish Woman in Rabbinic Literature* will clearly not satisfy a feminist outlook in its aims (or language): 'to give the fair sex its due by all means; to deny the feminine mystique, certainly not.'<sup>9</sup> This statement contains a recognizable anti-feminist strategy, whereby the subjection of woman to her existing condition (mystified) is achieved by insisting on the natural and equal value of that condition (fair due), regardless of woman's opinion.

What is absent from the survey of the respective female types in these works is the revisionist approach so central to feminist criticism. The revisionist element, the deconstruction of former assumptions about language, text or characterization in a given work, is the basis of feminist readings of literature. In his work on contemporary literary methodology, Jonathan Culler underlines precisely the valuable contribution of feminist critique for 'deconstructionist' literary theory.<sup>10</sup> Susan Kappeler's critique of the historical theoretical basis of artistic appreciation, including that of literature, *The Pornography of Representation*, does not use an 'Images of Women' approach, but her revisionist interpretation of Western cultural-philosophical tradition is unmistakably rooted in her feminist political stance.<sup>11</sup> The semiotic approach to literature in the many works of Julia Kristeva contains an ethic of subversion which is recognisably feminist in its consciousness of 'femininity' as 'marginality' in the patriarchal hierarchy.<sup>12</sup> Kristeva's refusal to align herself with the term 'feminism', or with any other political signifier, is itself part of her 'deconstructionist' approach to the poetics of language. As Moi puts it, it is:

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8 Khalid Kishtainy, *The Prostitute in Progressive Literature*, London, 1982.

9 Menachem M. Brayer, *The Jewish Woman in Rabbinic Literature*, Vol.1: *A Psychosocial perspective* ; Vol.2: *A Psychohistorical perspective*, Hoeboken, 1986, Vol.1, p.xiv.

10 Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstructionism: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*, London, 1983.

11 Susanne Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation*, Cambridge, 1986.

12 Moi, *op.cit.*, p.163.



an attempt to locate the negativity and refusal pertaining to the marginal in "woman", in order to undermine the phallogentric order that defines woman as marginal in the first place.<sup>13</sup>

The term 'feminist literary criticism' is a label, a method of classification, and as such is not any more or less adequate than any other classifier. Clearly there exist difficulties concerning what does or does not fall into the category, but this is an inevitable characteristic of classification. The real problem of this label is one which affects the term 'woman' itself, the problem which Kristeva, Moi and others have repeatedly identified: its construed marginality. What becomes obscured (except to feminists) in the label 'feminist literary criticism' is the fact that the referent 'literary' is at least as important to the critic as the referent 'feminist'.

The fact is that the term 'feminist', unreasonably, places this method on the periphery of the field of criticism. Jonathan Culler's recognition of the revisionist quality of feminist criticism is the exception, as he himself points out.<sup>14</sup> Neither Jean Yves Tadié's *La critique littéraire au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, published in Paris in 1987, nor Yiannis Stamiris' *Main Currents in Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, published in New York in 1986, include any commentary on feminist literary criticism in their broad survey of the field of criticism in this century up to the present day.<sup>15</sup> Ironically it is precisely in French and Anglo-American tradition that we can discern the two dominant lines of the modern movement of feminist criticism.<sup>16</sup>

Tadié and Stamiris do not claim to have written histories of critical theory, but have aimed to be as comprehensive as possible, within their own Western terms of reference. They endeavour to examine alongside the 'artistic', also the 'scientific' conceptual

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13 *ibid.*, p.163.

14 Culler, *op.cit.*, p.42. He writes: 'Though one of the most significant and broadly-based critical movements of recent years, feminist criticism is often ignored by self-styled historians of criticism and critical theory.' One recent exception is Raman Selden, *The Theory of Criticism: From Plato to the Present: A Reader*, New York, 1988, which includes a section entitled 'Morality, Class, and Gender' containing commentary on Beauvoir, Woolf, Kristeva, Cixous and Showalter, though this is by no means extensive. Curiously, the title of this section has been modified to 'Morality, Class and Ideology' on the back cover, while all other chapter headings are identical on the contents page and on the cover.

15 Jean Yves Tadié, *La critique littéraire au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1987; Yiannis Stamiris, *Main Currents in Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism: A Critical Study*, New York, 1986.

16 Moi, *op.cit.*, p.xiii.



approaches to literature.<sup>17</sup> In other words they cover the political, linguistic, sociological, and philosophical bases and orientations of twentieth-century literary theory. Stamiris' survey aims to outline:

some of the most promising paths that literary criticism has marked for the study of literary creations and the problems of literature in general.<sup>18</sup>

Tadié seeks to demonstrate that:

le dialogue qui fait la culture a engendré de nouvelles méthodes, qui ont mis fin a l'idée qu'il y avait une seule manière de parler des textes.<sup>19</sup>

The multiplicity of method and problem is the point emphasized by both authors, as well as the benefits of this actuality. Stamiris writes:

The variety of approaches and theories enriches our capability to deal with literature and all factors related to it.<sup>20</sup>

Neither author is limited to the traditions of the respective languages they write in. Tadié traces the development of literary theory from the Russian formalists to the 'most recent incarnations of the New Criticism' in Europe and America, while Stamiris begins with Taine, Marx and Engels and concludes with Sartre. As Tadié puts it:

comment négliger, en effet, les travaux des Russes, des Allemands, des Italiens, des Américains, au temps ou les hommes (*sic*), les idées, les sciences traversent toutes les frontières?<sup>21</sup>

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17 Tadié, *op.cit.*, p.13; Stamiris, *op.cit.*, p.xiv. Tadié's and Stamiris' approach are very similar but they define it in a slightly different way. In their introductions they state that they address a) the criticism of individual works, and b) the system of principles which construct a given theoretical approach in criticism. While both refer to the latter as 'scientific' criticism, Stamiris calls the former 'artistic', while Tadié sees it as an artistic aspect of the 'scientific'. Tadié calls real 'artistic' the criticism written by individuals who are themselves authors of *belles lettres*, to which his book, like Stamiris', is only partly devoted.

18 Stamiris, *op.cit.*, p.xiv.

19 Tadié, *op.cit.*, p.13; 'the dialogue which has formed culture has engendered new methods, which have put an end to the notion that there was only one way of discussing a given text.'

20 Stamiris, *op.cit.*, p.vxi.

21 Tadié, *op.cit.*, p.13: 'how can one neglect, indeed, the works of the Russians, the Germans, the Italians, the English, the Americans, at a time when men (*sic*), ideas, science cross every frontier?'



*En effet*, how can one neglect the ideas of men? Tadié acknowledges that at the risk of 'ignorance' or 'insufficiency', a choice must nonetheless be made. Stamiris too realizes his book contains only 'some of the most promising' approaches to criticism. In the case of both works the inevitable exercise of choice has meant the complete omission of feminist literary theory. At best a woman's voice is marginalized. Kristeva (who refuses the 'feminist' label) is mentioned in both works, though in Stamiris' case it is in a passing reference which makes no attempt to consider her own system of semiotic literary theories.<sup>22</sup> Tadié devotes a chapter sub-section to her under the heading 'Le groupe Tel Quel et Julia Kristeva'. This describes Kristeva's contribution to the fundamental concepts of the semiology formulated by the group, but takes no account of her particular challenge to the phallogentric elements of language structure.<sup>23</sup> Tadié appears to classify all literature and literary theory written by women with some relevance to their condition as women under the heading of autobiography. For this he relies on an article by Beatrice Didier entitled 'L'écriture-Femme'.<sup>24</sup>

Neither Tadié nor Stamiris mentions Kate Millett in England or Mary Ellman in America, whose works published in the late sixties have come to be seen as classics which marked the beginning of contemporary feminist literary theory. The influential French theorists Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray have also been excluded. Stamiris, who includes Sartre, ignores Beauvoir and Woolf. Thus the frontiers of science and nation have been crossed but not that of gender.

The use of the term 'feminist' in the title of *Moi's* book effectively signifies a courtesy which is not reciprocated by volumes of 'masculinist' writing. The word 'feminist' seems to overshadow the word 'literary' so completely that the compound term remains in total obscurity where histories of 'general' criticism are concerned. Whatever their standpoint, scholars of critical traditions demonstrate that literary criticism is a question of interpretation. New methods of interpretation offer fresh insight into a particular genre, author or work. Feminist critiques of culture have repeatedly proved themselves to be among the most dynamic and thought-provoking forms of cultural debate. As any collection of contemporary feminist criticism will reveal, it encompasses

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22 Stamiris, *op.cit.*, pp.145-46.

23 Tadié, *op.cit.*, pp.221-24.

24 *ibid.*, pp.259-60, refers to Beatrice Didier, PUF, 1981.



the political, philosophical, genetic, linguistic and other fields to which literary criticism has become linked in this century. Its ambition, as Kolodny's article describes it, is to address itself to the 'form' and 'canon' of masculinist literary traditions, enabling a new understanding of literature and its relevance to all people.<sup>25</sup> It is a method which not only reassesses individual authors and works, but which also challenges the established criteria for literary appreciation. Nevertheless the term 'feminist' will ensure that this form of criticism remains on the periphery. While its deconstructionist approach places it in the mainstream of contemporary critical methodology, the assumption of its specificity to women alone, has meant its exclusion from the broad field of literary theory. As Toril Moi, commenting on Kristeva, puts it:

Women seen as the limit of the symbolic order will in other words share in the disconcerting properties of *all* frontiers: they will be neither inside nor outside, neither known nor unknown.<sup>26</sup>

Neither fully excluded nor fully included, feminist literary criticism will exist not simply on, but as, the boundary of the canon, while 'masculinist' works like Tadié's and Stamiris' will continue to represent the canon itself.

A consciousness of the patterns of sexual stereotyping and of the masculine bias in literary tradition enables the reader to perceive anomalies in literary values and definitions which are accepted as given norms. By seeking to challenge a cultural tradition which is dominated by men and which is focused on male interests feminist critics have discovered that the concept of the universal is often a male prerogative.<sup>27</sup>

The realization of woman's ambivalent relationship to the human condition and its assumed universality occurs largely through the re-examination of cultural terms of reference. Luce Irigaray has noted that it is important to say:

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25 Kolodny, *op.cit.*, pp.6-7.

26 Moi, *op.cit.*, p.167.

27 Culler, *op.cit.*, p.51. As examples of this Culler quotes Elaine Showalter's observation that women readers 'are expected to identify with a masculine perspective and experience, which is presumed as the human one' (in *Women and the Literary Curriculum*, p.856), and Judith Fetterly's statement that most American fiction 'insists on its universality at the same time that it defines that universality in specifically male terms' (in *The Resisting Reader*, p.xii).



that although Freudian theory certainly gives us something that can shake the whole philosophical order of things, it paradoxically remains submissive to that order when it comes to the definition of sexual difference.<sup>28</sup>

Considering the origins and nature of discourse awakens the reader to an awareness of the masculinist centrality in definition, with which the reader is expected to identify regardless of gender. Revisionist readings of literature have sought to expose and rename this masculine self for what it is - at the very least: specific and non-universal. Deconstructionist approaches to the centrality of the engendering self in discourse raise the issue of displacement, and conclusions lead logically to the displacement of woman's self by the sovereignty of the phallic self. Thus the dismantling of patriarchal attitudes has come to be a major theme in deconstructionist approaches to literature, such as in the 'critique of phallogentrism' practised by Jacques Derrida. Derrida has underlined the importance of reference and meaning in discourse and its interpretation.<sup>29</sup> Phallogentric discourse displaces woman while claiming universality. Questioning the prerogative of the masculine to declare itself as the source of universal reference results in the redefinition of cultural attitudes and values.

The problem of reference and meaning with regard to woman's metaphysical condition was underlined at an early stage by Mary Daly, when she pointed out the importance of 'naming' in the creation of a world-view.<sup>30</sup> This theory of 'naming' has provided the groundwork for much feminist reinterpretation of cultural history. 'Images of woman' criticism, where it applies a feminist, revisionist interpretation to literature, seeks to redefine the terms of literary discourse on women, to 'rename' the meaning behind how women are portrayed or are seen to have been portrayed. Contemporary critics look back to the work of Mary Ellman as one of the first to analyze and 'deconstruct' the images of womanhood in fiction. For Moi, this approach as it is represented in the Cornillon collection, can suffer from its censoriously realist tendency. The demand that 'art should reflect life,' as Moi puts it,

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28      Moi, *op.cit.*, p.129.

29      Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Displacement and the Discourse of Woman' in Mark Krupnick, ed., *Displacement: Derrida and After*, Bloomington, 1983, p.169. Spivak's article examines the extent to which Derrida's critique can provide 'a network of concept metaphors that does not appropriate or displace the figure of woman.'

30      Daly, *op.cit.*, pp.xi-xx.



creates its own stereotypes, and adopts a system of categorization, which Ellman herself had sought to reject in her rereadings.<sup>31</sup>

Moi's comment refers to only one collection of 'Images of Woman' criticism, and while it is true that feminist critics do demand greater reality in the portrayal of women, this is too simple an assessment of the contribution of this approach in literary criticism. The claim for reality is itself a complex issue. It is not simply the need to see new stereotypes of women doing things they are known 'in reality' to do, but rather the need to have cultural media include the expression of woman's experience, the need for a female subject, the need for the (ordinary) reader to identify with (exceptional) heroines without being 'displaced' from the universal world-view. There are many layers of interpretation in the examination of how women are portrayed, which range from the exposure of cultural attitudes about women to the analysis of accepted criteria in male and female literary discourse, for both writers and characters.

Feminist / deconstructionist approaches addressed specifically to images of women can be a logical consequence of a cultural critique which is directed at a male dominated genre. Michelle Coquillat has studied the 'heroines' of French literature as projections of certain principles which reveal facets of patriarchal aesthetics.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, Klaus Theweleit uses this method to research the nature and roots of fascism as it is revealed in the fascist literature and memoirs of the German Freikorps.<sup>33</sup> In his preface Theweleit explains:

my decision to undertake an analysis of the soldier male's relationship to women was not made in advance. It did not originate in theory, nor have I grounded it in theory after the fact. The decision grew from reading the source documents, especially the peculiarities of passages in which women were mentioned.<sup>34</sup>

Coquillat's and Theweleit's works deconstruct cultural fantasies of womanhood precisely because they examine cultural constructs which are rooted inevitably in patriarchy. In this sense, female imagery provides an insight into the collective (patriarchal) and subjective (male) imagination which produces artistic and political ideology. It reflects not

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31      Moi, *op.cit.*, p.41.

32      Michelle Coquillat, *La poétique du mâle*, France, 1982.

33      Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, Vol 1: Women, floods, bodies, history.*, trans. Stephen Conway, Minneapolis, 1987 (1977).

34      Theweleit, *ibid.*, p.24.



only visions of womanhood, but also the necessary context from which such visions do issue.

## 0.2 Background Criteria

This study is a literary critical examination of the portrayal of women in the prose and drama of Finland and Russia from 1894 to 1914. The analysis concentrates on the image of woman with specific reference to the themes of political and artistic rebirth which preoccupied writers of this period. Behind this search for renewal lay a persistent concern over the spiritual direction of the nation, in which women's special role and nature were to become important motifs in works of fiction.

The parameters of this study are defined by a number of criteria present in the historical background and thematic focus of the subject. Background criteria relate to the contexts of period and place. The defining thematic elements are located in the comparative analysis, the philosophy of the woman question, other contemporary ideological tendencies, and of course the literary work itself.

### 0.2.1 Situation

A comparison between the literature of Finland and Russia requires some elucidation of the respective conditions and traditions of the two countries. Finland's status as a part of the Russian Empire for just over a century inevitably left its mark on the country's political-cultural life, but Finland also possessed, and successfully retained, an altogether separate cultural heritage. Moreover, it was precisely under Tsarist rule that the Finns' consciousness of their own national identity first began to take shape<sup>35</sup>. The ambiguity of this position of integration and autonomy generates a number of similarities and differences between Finland and Russia which have a bearing on the historical context of this study. These are located in the relationship of Finland and Russia to Western culture, in the progressive, ideological response to the autocracy, and within the separate traditions of the two countries.

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35 For a brief survey of the relationship between Finland and Russia and the beginnings of Finnish national awakening in the nineteenth century see D.G. Kirby, *Finland in the Twentieth Century*, London, 1979, pp.14-19.

### 0.2.1.1 On the Periphery of Europe

The geographic locations of Finland and Russia place them literally on the periphery of Central Europe. This topographic reality often appears almost more of a metaphor, however, for the relationship of the intellectual life of these countries to the West. At the turn of the century this relationship was peripheral not so much by virtue of geography, as by virtue of the intellectual response to Western cultural developments. The economic backwardness of the Empire, as well as the politically archaic system of autocratic rule naturally contributed to the impression of being on the fringes of European civilization, but it is rather the ambivalent attitude towards Europe that creates the impression of remoteness.

'Westernism' itself has an established past in Russia with those European customs adopted by Peter the Great lasting well into the nineteenth century. The influence of the Petrine era has been described as:

almost a century of apprenticeship to French classical literature, German and Scandinavian governmental institutions, Italian architecture, and English mathematics and science.<sup>36</sup>

Likewise in Finland, centuries of Swedish rule brought with it many of the major phases of West European historical developments. Since the arrival of Catholic missionaries in Finland in the Middle Ages:

a more sophisticated intellectual life and literary culture burgeoned on the western side of Finland, and from the start were given a decidedly Western stamp.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the impact of Europeanization on Finland and Russia, Western values did not eradicate the indigenous cultural inheritance. Historically, the degree of penetration into these areas is certainly an important factor. Many major developments common to the vital

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36 Victor Terras, ed., *Handbook of Russian Literature*, New Haven, 1985, p.517. The entry provides a concise definition and survey of 'Westernism' in Russia, pp.517-18.

37 Aarno Maliniemi, 'Suomen keskiaikainen kirjallisuus' in Martti Rapola, ed., *Suomen Kirjallisuus II: Ruotsin ajan kirjallisuus*, Helsinki, 1963, p.7; 'Korkeampi kulttuurielämä ja kirjallinen sivistys pääsivät versomaan valtarajan länsipuolella ja saivat alusta alkaen täysin läntisen leiman.' The book provides a detailed survey of cultural influences arriving through Sweden when Finland was part of the Swedish kingdom.



centres of Europe, such as the Reformation, failed to make any great impression on Russia, and where they reached Finland, they often failed to penetrate the more remote, inner areas of the country. A consequence of this was that 'Westernism' was by no means a cohesive phenomenon. It was limited by social sector and by epoch. Before the nineteenth century, the philosophical and aesthetic habits of Europe were appropriated wholeheartedly by the small creative or intellectual élite, while the Russian and Finnish past continued to survive (if not thrive) in the way of life and creative traditions of the rest of the population.<sup>38</sup> It is in the nineteenth century that the geographical periphery becomes less of a literal reality and more of a cultural metaphor.

With the rise of Romanticism, the ideology of national heritage inevitably directed attention towards a past, and a people, which had little in common with the European model of the modern, civilized world. The nineteenth century witnessed an interesting paradox as intellectuals endeavoured to reconcile Enlightenment ideology with the 'unenlightened' world-view of ancient, native cultures, which had previously been considered best ignored. For many, the new intellectual scrutiny of folk traditions and the national past meant the rejection of the former cultural dependency on Westernism. For those who continued to study Western trends, the practice of acquiring another culture was replaced by the desire to mould Western philosophical tendencies to a national context. In both Finland and Russia, the leading thinkers of the nineteenth century 'nationalized' Western philosophy.<sup>39</sup>

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38 In both countries educated society simply acquired another culture. In Finland after the Reformation, those who followed the philosophical and aesthetic developments of the West adopted Swedish as their first language and 'instead of adapting foreign ideas to a Finnish context, they began to implant them in their alien form' (Matti Kuusi, Michael Branch, Keith Bosley, eds, *Finnish Folk Poetry : Epic: An Anthology in Finnish and English*, Helsinki, 1977, p.61). In Russia, the Petrine 'apprenticeship' to European culture meant that French became the language of the élite (Terras, *op.cit.*, p.517).

39 See Anthony M. Miklotin, ed., *Western Philosophical Systems in Russian Literature: A Collection of Critical Studies*, Los Angeles, 1979, for various incisive examples of 'russified' interpretations of Western thought from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century. See Gunnar Tideström, *Runeberg som estetiker: litterära och filosofiska idéer i den unge Runebergs författarskap*, Helsingfors, 1941, especially Chap. 8, 'Runebergs filosofiska miljö', pp.283-99, for an overview of early nineteenth-century reactions in Finland to the work of leading Western philosophers. For late nineteenth-century attitudes see Annamari Sarajas, *Viimeiset romantikot*, Porvoo, 1962.



By the end of the nineteenth century the West European value system and the special native character continuously interact. In both countries there is an ambivalent relationship to the values represented by the West, and to the potential energy of the native population. In Russia, Europe represents the possibility for higher development, the opposite of 'barbarism', but at the same time, the danger of decay and self-destruction, defined variously as positivism or materialism. In Finland, Central Europe also appears as the source of liberal and progressive political-cultural phenomena. On the other hand, the highly developed urban centres of Central Europe, lacking in Finland, are identified with the corruption of moral and social values and with spiritual decline.<sup>40</sup> The alienation of the individual in a social system based on economic or political self-interest is a recurrent theme in Russian and Finnish realist writing and is interwoven with speculation on the future of the nation.

Within the symbolist movement especially, the double-edged aspect of the West produces certain tensions in the understanding of creativity. While realist writers pursue socio-economic and political orientations, symbolist writers confront aesthetic problems in Western philosophy. Western cultural history is the source of perfected aesthetic ideals, but that perfection has also become refined into cynical artifice, a concentration on form which is dangerously divorced from genuine human aspirations.<sup>41</sup> Writers in Finland and Russia seek to apply their system of aesthetics to a revitalization of self-identity, in which spiritual life, the nation and the individual all have an essential function.<sup>42</sup>

The reaction to Westernism which emerges in literature at the turn of the century maintains the impression of Russia and Finland as areas on the cultural periphery. European values alone cannot satisfy the future ambitions of these countries. In the picture of the socio-

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40 In this sense St Petersburg represents an aspect of the West in Finland. It is not the 'eastern' features of Russia (Orthodoxy, serfdom, peasantry, autocracy), which emerge in negative images of St Petersburg in Finnish fiction, but precisely the aristocratic indulgence adopted from Western Europe.

41 Some writers of course promoted 'form', perceived as the pro-Western (non-national) line. In Russia, Valerii Briusov and in Finland, Otto Manninen were the leaders of form in Symbolism.

42 Pekka Pesonen, *Vallankumouksen henki hengen vallankumouksessa: tutkielma Andrei Belyn romaanista "Peterburg" ja sen aatetaustasta*, Helsinki, 1987. Chap. 3 contains an outline of the picture of the West, and interpretations of Western philosophy, in Russian Symbolism, pp.67-85. Pesonen notes the importance of duality for Russian eschatological thought, in which the dichotomy of East / West frequently comes into play.



economically exploitative, aesthetically redundant qualities of Western values, there exists an underlying current of revolutionary unrest. In the adaptation of progressive Western ideals to the national context lie hopes of renewal.

#### 0.2.1.2 Within the Empire

In the combination of Western progressive ideology with internal national concerns, Finland and Russia have two important, common characteristics. In both cases, literature / literary criticism become the fora for philosophical polemic, and the woman question is a principal topic within that polemic.

Early connections between literature, the national ideal and feminism are evident in the first half of the nineteenth century. The censorial nature of the autocratic structure gave literature a special role in Finland and Russia as an organ of protest and resistance. In Russia, the link between political theory and literary theory can be traced throughout the nineteenth century. In Finland, the language movement and the development of a native literature, first in Swedish and then in Finnish, were the most salient factors in the political awakening of the nineteenth century.

Continuous shifts between support for regional autonomy and strict centralization characterized the history of imperial Russian rule.<sup>43</sup> This process created waves of liberalism and repression throughout the Empire during the last century. As a Grand Duchy, Finland also experienced these waves, albeit in a considerably more subdued form than in many other regions. In the intellectual circles of the two countries, the oscillation between tolerance and censorship only fostered a sense of resistance and determination for change. During the first half of the repressive reign of Nicholas I, among the most important influences was the Hegelian aesthetic ideal, which reached Helsinki through St Petersburg.<sup>44</sup> At this time, the ideas and work of leading intellectuals, such as Johan Ludwig Runeberg and Elias Lönnrot in

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43 See J. N. Westwood, *Endurance and Endeavour: Russian History 1812-1986*, 3rd ed., Oxford, 1987.

44 Kirby notes that 'Hegelian ideas gained a footing in Finland during the 1820s, but not until the 1880s in Sweden' (Kirby, *op.cit.*, p.17.). Also, Taimo Iisalo states that the discussion over grammar schools in Finland in this period shows evidence that philosophical ideas entered the country from the East. (Taimo Iisalo, *The Science of Education in Finland 1828-1918*, Helsinki, 1979, p.29.)



Finland, and Aleksandr Herzen and Vissarion Belinskii in Russia, cultivated a theory of literature conscious of its historical significance for a separate cultural, national identity.<sup>45</sup> By the second half of Nicholas I's reign, the woman question, chiefly inspired by readings of George Sand, had penetrated the literary intellectual milieu.

In Russia, evidence of Sandian views of freedom in love become particularly evident from 1855 onwards in the publicist articles of Nikolai Chernyshevskii for the radical journal *Sovremennik* ('The Contemporary'). Chernyshevskii included female emancipation in his programme for change based on rationalist principles. In his examination of Chernyshevskii's readings of Rousseau, James P. Scanlan has noted that 'revolutionary republicanism, feminism, and the ideal of the natural man' are three areas in which the two thinkers come into contact.<sup>46</sup> Scanlan suggests that of all the Western philosophers who may have influenced Chernyshevskii, only Rousseau and Sand could be said to have exercised true dominion over his own philosophical outlook.<sup>47</sup> The associations that Scanlan makes between these three subjects, as well as between the three thinkers, reflect the link in the background of this study: the 'nationalized' progressive ideal in which the woman question has a strong dimension. In Chernyshevskii's blueprint for an egalitarian utopian society, the novel *Chto delat'* (1863)<sup>48</sup>, Scanlan sees the character Dikarev as:

an ideal fictional representative for Chernyshevsky -- a dialectical synthesis of the French philosopher and his Russian materialization.<sup>49</sup>

Concerning the figure of Vera, the novel's main protagonist, Scanlan adds:

in russianizing Rousseau's Julie, Chernyshevsky saw himself as forwarding a course of progress pointed out by Rousseau.<sup>50</sup>

In Finland the ideology of the woman question is simultaneously more muted and more pronounced. Its challenge did not go so far as

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45 For Hegelianism in Finland see for example Tideström, *op.cit.*, and in Russia, Victor Terras, *Belinskij and Russian Literary Criticism*, Wisconsin, 1974.

46 James P. Scanlan, 'Chernyshevsky and Rousseau' in Miklotin, *op.cit.*, p.110.

47 *ibid.*, p.105.

48 *What's to be Done. A Romance*, trans. B. Tucker, Boston, 1886.

49 Scanlan, *op.cit.*, p.1

50 *ibid.*, p.113.



Chernyshevskii's controversial fictional portrait of Vera, but its challenge was greater in that it established a real woman's voice in intellectual life. The emergence of the woman question is marked by the decision of Johan Vilhelm Snellman, the most outspoken campaigner for the promotion of a Finnish consciousness, to publish Fredrika Runeberg's 'drawings and dreams' in his journal *Litteraturbladet* ('Literary Journal'), after 1856.<sup>51</sup> Snellman had earlier taken up the controversial issue of girls' education in another publication<sup>52</sup>. Like Chernyshevskii's, Snellman's views about literature had unmistakeable political overtones, the tremors of which disquieted the imperial government.<sup>53</sup> According to David Kirby, a national culture based on conscious national spirit, in turn based on the Finnish language, 'was the basic and uncompromising message spelt out by Snellman in innumerable articles for forty years.'<sup>54</sup> Fredrika Runeberg's presence in the cultural milieu dominated by the leading proponents of Finnishness, reflects the profile of woman's issues. These became an integrated aspect of national, progressive ideology; although attitudes remained ambivalent nonetheless. Snellman, for example, expressed certain reservations over signs of excessive feminism in Frederika Runeberg's work.<sup>55</sup>

Fredrika Runeberg herself was the first real voice of feminism to be heard in Finland. Like women writers of her era such as Karolina Pavlova in Russia, Fredrika Runeberg discussed in her works the limits of women's accepted sphere long before Snellman or Chernyshevskii chose to address the problem. However, unlike Pavlova, whose dedication to her career as a poet lost her her friends and position, Fredrika Runeberg never published under her own name.<sup>56</sup> Pavlova's lack of apologetic stance over her art lost her the popularity that other women writers in Russia enjoyed.<sup>57</sup> But it was Chernyshevskii's work, rather than that of women writers, that marked the endorsement of the

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51 Tyyni Tuulio, *Fredrikan Suomi*, Porvoo, 1979, p.23.

52 *ibid.*, p.21. The publication was *Saima*.

53 Snellman had been forced to leave Finland between 1839 -1842. For an analysis of Snellman's understanding of literature as a force of national awakening see Pertti Karkama, *J.V. Snellmanin kirjallisuuspoltiikka*, Helsinki, 1989.

54 Kirby, *op.cit.*, p.17.

55 Karkama, *op.cit.*, p.228.

56 Tuulio, *op.cit.*, p.20. She used the pseudonym 'a.g.'

57 For a survey of Pavlova's career see Barbara Heldt, 'Karolina Pavlova: The Woman Poet and the Double Life', introduction to Karolina Pavlova, *A Double Life*, trans. Barbara Heldt, Ann Arbor, 1978 (1848), pp.i-xxii.



woman question as a genuine issue within contemporary ideological theory. Likewise the real significance of Fredrika Runeberg's work was its appearance in *Litteraturbladet*. It was a sign of developments which associated the woman question with the broader question of national cultural destiny, as this gained political meaning.

### 0.2.1.3 Separate Traditions

Many features of intellectual life in Finland and Russia reflect parallel development. The conditions of autocracy turned the literary spheres of both countries into an arena for political-philosophical debate. In general, the main currents of Western thought came into vogue at the same time, which tended to be fifteen to twenty years after their appearance in Central Europe. This was in part due to the fact that the channel of ideas to Helsinki passed through St Petersburg. Integration in the Empire established a basis for cultural contact.<sup>58</sup>

While the relationship to the West, and the ideological resistance to imperial reaction are factors which Finland and Russia have in common, they are factors which are modified by respective cultural background. Kirby has remarked that, on the eve of the twentieth century:

if Finland did not fit into the same category as the industrial nations of the West, neither did it resemble the more backward societies of the Russian Empire.<sup>59</sup>

Divergences between the cultural traditions inevitably influenced the literary output, so it perhaps is worth mentioning the most relevant, disparate features of the two countries here.

One important point which differentiates Finland from the rest of the Russian Empire is the nature of relationships between different sectors of society. Serfdom was not known in Finland, which meant that:

the rigid caste mentality of the Baltic barons hardly existed in Finland.(...) There was no brutal oppression of the peasantry, which did indeed have political representation.<sup>60</sup>

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58 See Annamari Sarajas, *Tunnuskuvia: Suomen ja Venäjän kirjallisen realismin kosketuskohtia*, Porvoo, 1968.

59 Kirby, *op.cit.*, p.21.

60 *ibid.*, p.21.



The status and size of the majority population in Russia created a much larger gulf between the privileged intellectual minority and its fellow compatriots. Population mobility and consequently access to education were considerably facilitated in Finland. Russia's long history of serfdom suggests not only a more physically arduous past, but also a different metaphysical understanding of human bonds.

The intellectual class was able to identify with the mass of the population more easily in Finland. Moreover, this identification became a programmatic precondition of the national movement. In this sense the extreme factions of national consciousness in the nineteenth century had very different manifestations. In Russia, Slavophilism was an extremely conservative movement, distinctly aristocratic in nature. It was rather the 'Westernists' (Herzen, Belinskii, Chernyshevskii), who conceived Russian national ideals according to progressive principles. In Finland, the committed Fennoman tendency was a liberal movement, the driving ambition of which was to identify with the rural population and adopt its language. Led by Swedish-speaking intellectuals, it represented a parallel to the phenomenon of the Russian 'Westernists'. At its most liberal, it also endorsed co-operation with the authorities, scholars and artists of St Petersburg, insofar as these offered opportunities to foster national ideals. An example of this is the case of A. J. Sjögren, who undertook his pioneering research into Finno-Ugrian peoples at the Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg. For the more radical Snellman, a decade later, conscious of the dangers of russification, such a move constituted a betrayal of the Finnish cause, despite its contribution to cultural identity.<sup>61</sup>

Snellman's censure of Sjögren and other Finns who had gone to Russia to work reflects the fact that 'East', as well as 'West', bore significance for the nineteenth-century nationalist philosophy. The ambivalence in the concept of the European periphery continues to be evident in images of the East. By the turn of the century in Finland, Russia represents the West, with its urbanized, Europeanized high society, as well as the threatening force of the East, with its very real danger of uncompromising, autocratic power. Finland becomes identified with a new independent direction, a contrast to the degeneracy of the modern world (West), as well as to the 'uncivilized', archaic state

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61 Michael Branch, *A.J. Sjögren: Studies of the North*, Helsinki, 1973, pp.261-62.



system (East). In Russia, fears of the East are closely associated with the threat from Japan, but the East also signifies that which is not western, in other words the source of Russia's own ancient, native traditions. These traditions are perceived as expressing a deeper spirituality, proximity to land and nature, or universal mysticism. Russia's direction is identified as a mission of renewal.

An obvious, but crucial reason for these national self-images is that the political ambitions of the two nations at the turn of the century were quite different. Finnish intellectuals were promoting the right to self-determination of a small nation oppressed from without, while, in Russia the mounting protest was internal, the intellectual class rebelling against its own system of government. This fact is naturally reflected throughout the political and cultural history of the two countries, and not least within their literatures.

There are several other elements which affect the concept of historical direction, particularly with regard to the role of woman within it. As these emerge in the main text of this study, they are only mentioned briefly here. First, it is wise to bear in mind that in Russia the level of censorship had generally been much more severe than in Finland throughout the nineteenth century. Secondly, the degree of urbanization in Russia was also much greater. This study is not intended to assess the effects of these specific factors on nationalist themes or the portrayal of women. Nevertheless, they are facts which are worth remembering given the inevitable influence of censorship and environment on writers' output. A history of harsher political and social conditions in Russia undoubtedly contributes to the more radical and more decadent elements in its literature at the turn of the century.

Another major cultural determinant of a nation's spiritual destiny lies in its religious traditions. Finland's experience of Christianity, with the arrival of Catholicism in the Middle Ages followed by the Reformation, contrasts strongly with Russia's Orthodoxy. In their themes of spirituality, as well as in their criticism of religious dogma, writers naturally think from within and address themselves to the respective Lutheran and Orthodox world-views of the two countries, however much they believe they have freed themselves from this influence. Moreover, with the symbolist interest in national oral traditions, Russian writers appear to find the values of folk culture not incompatible with the spiritual seekings of Orthodox faith. In



Finland, writers reject more categorically Lutheran morality in favour of a system of belief expressed in ancient non-Christian culture, perceived as spiritually more enriching.

These cultural traditions, combined with the political and economic conditions in Russia and Finland form the locational background to the period under examination.

### 0.2.2 Periodization

The period covered by this study falls between two 'natural boundaries' of history: the death in 1894 of Tsar Alexander III, and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Natural boundaries are only part of the landscape however, and a period in history cannot be isolated from what came before or was to come after. Dates often serve the purpose of delineating the otherwise elusive impression of a given era, generation or movement. Such dates, however, must also be flexible depending on the breadth and direction of the historical perspective. Relevant to this study is the fact that the two decades leading up to 1914 represent a period of culmination and transition in Finland and Russia. The ideological and economic forces of the nineteenth century culminate in political tensions by the 1890s, reaching a breaking point in the rebellions of 1905, with the first revolution in Russia and the General Strike in Finland. Both were quickly suppressed, but the unrest was nevertheless a sign of transition. The autocracy was undermined, pessimism reigned and the oppressive atmosphere of the post-1905 years created the momentum for the second Russian revolution and the declaration of Finnish independence in 1917. In each case, this final transition meant the creation of a new state on the ideological and political principles which had led these nations to resistance and revolution. These principles reflected a sort of collective individualism, in which equality and self-determination were key aspects. As members of society who had hitherto most literally been deprived of any claim to equality and self-determination, women had been central to the struggle.

#### 0.2.2.1 The Women's Movement

Women's lives and the women's movement were substantially affected by the transformations that were taking place within them at the turn of



the century. A brief account of the evolution of organized feminism may be useful here for an understanding of conditions in Finland and Russia at the turn of the century.

In his book, *The Feminists*, Richard Evans identifies a particular intellectual tradition, social sector and process of economic change as common factors in the emergence of organized feminism all over the developed world. Evans traces the ideology back to the intellectual liberalism of the Enlightenment, which was open to feminist arguments, and explains the political mobilization which took place in the nineteenth century as the result of socio-economic factors affecting woman's role within her social class.<sup>62</sup> The utilitarianism which had challenged notions of a pre-ordained social hierarchy and encouraged the growth of capitalism wrought its most immediate changes on the role of women in the middle classes. The question of employment as well as household management created the demand for more suitable education for women. Those opposed to this expansion of women's sphere feared the breakdown of that firm sign of social order, family stability. Feminists, largely because it was their best defence, reasoned that it was precisely in order to serve the family better that women should broaden their knowledge and skills.

The problem of employment naturally involved working-class women, but they often became disillusioned with the achievements of middle-class feminism. Philanthropic organizations founded by wealthier women often failed to appreciate the practical needs of working women, with the result that the latter turned to the labour movement. Working women sought improvements to their conditions of work and human rights as part of the class struggle, but the socialist cause invariably obscured women's particular interests. Attempts to establish special women's organizations within the labour movement were viewed with suspicion, and aroused fears of internal divisiveness.

On both the left and the right, women's interests were supported only insofar as they presented no fundamental challenge to patriarchy. The relationship between men and women, and the social structure based on the family ideal, never suffered the dangers of collapse that opponents of women's rights feared. In effect, women were driven to reiterate these ideals in order to justify their demands. If the masculinist

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62 Richard Evans, *The Feminists: Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe, America and Australasia, 1884-1920*, New York, 1977, p.23.



status quo was firmly upheld, there was also widespread awareness that the present position of women no longer benefited it. Within the ethic of collective individualism, it became impossible to justify women's lack of opportunities either in terms of their personal fulfilment or in terms of their contribution to society. The consequent need to redefine woman's role in such a way as to profit both herself and her environment, meant that the 'essential nature' of the female being became a focal point in the debate.

It is important to note here another influential factor in the shaping of views on women's role: the changing attitudes about children. These also had their roots in Enlightenment thought, and were encouraged by the developments in pedagogical and other scientific fields.<sup>63</sup> Children had been perceived as short, inefficient adults. By the turn of the century, with the surge of interest in human psychology, children attained an almost revered position as symbols of a state of 'innocence'. Moreover, a new emphasis on children as the following generation of adults brought more careful consideration of their formative education.<sup>64</sup> Inevitably, women's function as mothers, and consequently as wives, since this was the only desirable state in which they could be mothers, came to be seen as the clue to the enigma of the female character.

The view of wife and mother was a view of carer and educator, and therefore essentially related to the moral idea. The superior morality of woman was often hailed as a civilizing force, and indeed women channelled their energies into exercising this influence for the social good. Alcohol and prostitution, which caused women hardship and humiliation, and fostered an unhealthy hypocrisy, were the main issues in their programme for improving the moral standard. However, women were soon to find that without political power they could affect little real change. In the gradual process which culminated in the

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63 For a history of pedagogy, see for example Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, London, 1962.

64 This interest is reflected in the literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Finland and Russia, where the child becomes a frequent psychological type. In particular, this functions as a technique for exploring themes of innocence, exploitation, freedom, and fantasy. There is also a surge of literary critical interest in portraits of children in earlier fiction. The consciousness of children as a new generation is especially significant in Finland and Russia in view of the prevailing concern for the respective nation's future. Themes of generation and heritage are widespread in the literature of this period.



demand for the vote, it was these moral issues which had a politicizing effect on women.<sup>65</sup>

Evans describes this process, from the need for employment and education, to the moral issue and ultimately to a political consciousness, as the pattern of development towards organized feminism in the nineteenth century. In Finland and Russia, lagging behind advanced and industrialized Europe, the transition from the Woman Question to the Women's Movement occurred at a relatively late stage, in the 1880s.<sup>66</sup> Mobilization towards the demand for enfranchisement only occurred in the early 1900s.

Between 1880 and 1920 in the Empire, women's history offers its own landmarks. With reference to Russia, Richard Stites has noted that for her part in the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, the revolutionary, Sofia Perovskaia became 'the first woman political to mount the scaffold'.<sup>67</sup> After the October revolution in 1917, it was decreed that women were to be granted 'complete civil, legal and electoral equality in the new state'.<sup>68</sup> In Finland, the first women's organization was founded in 1884, and in 1906, Finnish women made their mark on recorded history by becoming the first women in Europe to be granted full parliamentary franchise.

Characteristic of such dates in Russian and Finnish women's history is that the events they record reflect unmistakably the place that the women's cause held within the national issue. The activities of women within the radical movement, as well as the persistent efforts of moderate feminists in official political life in Russia has been well

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65 Evans, *op.cit.*, p.36.

66 For a comprehensive account of the situation in Russia see Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism and Bolshevism 1860-1930*, Princeton, 1978. The author divides his period into three phases, entitled '1855-1880 The Woman Question', '1881-1917 The Women's Movement', and 'Women's Liberation'. Information on the situation in Finland is less easily located, but publications on this subject indicate a similar periodization in the two phases of 'question' and 'movement'. Sisko Wilkama, *Naissivistyksen periaatteiden kehitys 1840-1880 -luvulla*, Helsinki, 1938, provides a background to the early ideology, strongly focused on the issue of education. There is much more research on the movement, invariably dating it from around 1884, as indicated in Riitta Jallinoja, *Suomalaisen naisasialiikkeen taistelukaudeksi*, Porvoo, 1983.

67 Stites, *op.cit.*, p.148.

68 *ibid.*, p.327. The author informs us that these rights 'were first decreed in January 1918 and incorporated a few months later in the Constitution.'



documented.<sup>69</sup> In 1898, Zinaida Vengerova writing on feminism, was to exaggerate the point in her statement that:

In Russia, the woman question in the literal sense of the term does not exist. Russian woman possessed an inner freedom even during that period of her history when she found herself in the terem.<sup>70</sup>

For Vengerova, feminism was a 'barbaric term' fit only for the emotionally passive French women in need of separate inner emancipation.<sup>71</sup> She mentions the contrast between inner freedom and external slavery as a central theme in ancient Russian literature which displays evidence of the equality between Russian men and women in the struggle for freedom.<sup>72</sup>

In Finland, the emergence of women's organizations was part of a process of widespread social organization in which national interests were prominent. In her analysis of such organizations, Irma Sulkunen has observed that:

their various activities certainly did not always directly promote the women's cause, the achievement of woman's social and political equality, but rather took the national interest of the whole country as their basic argument.<sup>73</sup>

Sulkunen notes that the Martha Organization, founded in 1900 and one of the most effective organizations to evolve out of the Finnish Women's Union, aimed to watch over the national tendencies of women on the Finnish-Karelian border and guard Finnish youth from harmful political influences.<sup>74</sup> Indeed in 1906, the vote itself was won

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69 See for example Barbara Alpern Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, Cambridge, 1981, for women radicals, and Linda Harriet Edmondson, *Feminism in Russia 1900-17*, London, 1984, for moderate feminists.

70 Zinaida Vengerova, 'Feminism i zhenskaia svoboda' (*Obrazovanie*, 5 - 6, 1898, pp.73-74); 'В России женского вопроса в собственном смысле слова не существует. Русская женщина была внутренне свободна даже в теремном периоде своей истории.'

71 *ibid.*, p.76-7; 'варварское слово.'

72 *ibid.*, p.74.

73 Irma Sulkunen, 'Naisten yleinen järjestäytyminen ja naisasialiike vuosisadan vaihteessa' in Katarina Eskola, Elina Haavio-Mannila, Riitta Jallinoja, eds, *Naisnäkökulmia*, Juva, 1979, p.119; 'toimintamuodot eivät läheskään aina palvelleet suoranaisesti naisasiaa, naisen yhteiskunnallisen ja poliittisen tasa-arvon toteuttamista, vaan perusargumenttina pidettiin koko maan kansallista etua.'

74 *ibid.*, p.119.



together with a new constitution, in a tsarist reform which Finns hoped would check the imperial pressure on their autonomous status.

#### 0.2.2.2 Stages of Russification and Generations of Writers

The study of women in Russia identifies a phase which extends beyond 1894 and 1914, to encompass the reign of Alexander III and the war years. Both Tsars to rule in this era were consistent in their reactionary attitude towards any increase in opportunities for women and any extension of their civil rights. Alexander III favoured the element of opposition to women's education in the government.<sup>75</sup> Under his successor, Nicholas II, the government failed to include Russian women in the electorate for the new parliament in 1905. In Finland the phase, which also begins under Alexander III, seems to reach an early conclusion with the establishment of female suffrage in 1906.<sup>76</sup>

This analysis addresses itself to the subject of women in cultural history rather than to the women's movement directly. Thus the comparison of Finnish and Russian literature requires certain modifications in periodization. The reign of Alexander III, as well as the impact of war and revolution, will remain outside the main focus of the study. The nature and consequences of the conservatism in the imperial régime are relevant to the comparative aspect of this study. As far as Finland in particular is concerned, it was only in the 1890s that the country began to experience the effects of imperial reaction that had already been directed at other parts of the Empire. In the 1880s, Tsar Alexander III's policies of russification were concentrated at the Baltic States.<sup>77</sup> At this stage, Finland's status as a Grand Duchy within the Empire had indeed become a matter of fractious debate, but actual measures of imperial control were first introduced only in 1890, with the incorporation of the postal service. These measures culminated in a decree issued in 1899 known as the February manifesto, outlining a

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75 Stites, *op.cit.*, p.158. The author describes how the reactionary element of the government, notably the powerful statesman Pobedonostsev, 'menaced those who were trying to undermine the sacred institutions of Holy Russia – the Church, the State, property, and the family,' in other words the foundations of the patriarchal order.

76 Jallinoja, for example, states that the first period of the women's movement reaches a climax between 1906 and 1908. Jallinoja, *op.cit.*, p.115.

77 Violet Conolly, 'The "nationalities question" in the last phase of tsardom' in Erwin Oberländer, George Katkov, Nikolaus Poppe, Georg von Rauch, eds, *Russia Enters the Twentieth Century 1894-1917*, New York, 1971, p.171.



programme to curb Finnish autonomy.<sup>78</sup> After this, two phases of oppression are recognized in Finnish history, generally dated from the February manifesto to 1905, and from 1908 to 1917. The phases of russification policy, as well as the interim period of relaxation, paralleled the imperial government's attempts to maintain control within Russia itself. In both countries, the insurgent events of 1905 led to liberal reforms which were to prove ineffectual. The post-1905 years witnessed increasing disillusion with the powers of the constitutional bodies to improve conditions through legal means. Writers active between 1894 and 1914 lived through a period of cynical turmoil, created out of the tensions generated by repression and resistance.

The literature of the years 1894 to 1914 is characterized by the two main tendencies of Realism and Symbolism.<sup>79</sup> In this particular period, the former is a newly adapted extension of the nineteenth-century trends, while the latter represents a conscious break from the realist approach. Exponents of both movements take up themes of renewal in which an ideal of womanhood plays a significant role. The position of women, and the philosophy of the feminine, were matters which came to the fore of the intellectual challenge to conservative values.

Broadly speaking, the period contains two generations of writers who discuss themes of political and artistic transition and rebirth in their work. A new generation of writers emerged in the 1880s, usually identified in literary histories with the first publications of Anton Chekhov in Russia, and Juhani Aho or Minna Canth in Finland. For the most part the early works of this generation of writers will not be considered here, as the 1880s and early 1890s largely represent a formative period in their work and in their ideas, which were to be more clearly formulated and expressed a decade later. It is, moreover, not until the mid-1890s that these writers, provoked by the atmosphere of growing repression, began to raise issues related to the question of national destiny. From this point on too, women begin to appear more frequently as protagonists, and their characterization becomes more

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78 Kirby, *op.cit.*, pp.24-5.

79 These terms will be used in their generally accepted meaning, and not in order to enter the debate on their precise definition. Descriptions in English of these movements in the relevant countries and period can be found in for example Terras, ed., *Handbook of Russian Literature*, and Kai Laitinen, *Literature of Finland: An Outline*, Helsinki, 1985. A point to note here is that in Finland the manifestation of turn-of-the-century Symbolism is known as Neo-Romanticism. I will make no distinction between these terms, but will prefer Symbolism for the sake of convenience when drawing comparisons.



detailed. Nevertheless, certain individual works published earlier will be mentioned where their relevance is central to the topic, such as works by the much older Lev Tolstoi, whose philosophy of sexuality had too great an impact to be ignored.

The younger generation of writers considered in this study including, for instance, Aleksandr Blok and Aino Kallas begin publishing in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Their pre-war work largely constitutes a coherent phase, after which a number of factors, not least of which war, as well as revolution, independence, the new state, or emigration, turn them in new literary directions. Many works published during the war years are early contributions to the Modernism of the 1920s. A comparison between the literatures of the Soviet Union and independent Finland would represent a completely new subject since the social and political programmes of these separate states are very different. Also, post-war images of women and concepts of national identity belong to a new vision, more closely associated with the phase of 'liberation' than of that of 'movement'. For this reason the period concludes in 1914. Where works published between 1914 and 1918 are considered, it is because they belong stylistically or ideologically as part of the pre-war era.

For its primary sources this study concentrates on prose and drama (including lyrical drama) and excludes poetry and autobiography. This is partly dictated by practicalities, since it was necessary to limit the vast body of material, and partly by the need to maintain some consistency in the method of interpretation. Thus the interpretation concentrates on the type of characterization which is used for narrative and dramatic text. Since this study examines the image of women in relation to the main political and aesthetic movements of the period, it focuses on those writers who can be said to have shaped contemporary ideology. In this sense it is a study of the established literary 'canon'. It does not, therefore, include popular writers.

As a result of all the above criteria, only one Russian woman writer, Zinaida Gippius, falls within the scope of this work, while on the Finnish side the canon is represented by several women writers. Russian women writers traditionally favoured the genres of autobiography or poetry.<sup>80</sup> Although Gippius too was best known for

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80 Barbara Heldt, *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature*, Bloomington, 1987, pp.8-9. Heldt's book examines the reasons why Russian women preferred these

her poetry, she produced a substantial amount of prose writing from the 1890s onwards and was an influential figure in the Symbolist movement. Other important Russian women prose writers do not fit into the framework outlined in this introduction. Elena Guro, for example, belongs in style and subject to the coming generation of the Futurists, although her first short story appeared as early as 1905. Anastasiia Verbitskaia and Evdovkia Nagrodskaia, who acquired a certain amount of notoriety for their studies of 'sexual problems', were essentially considered to be writers of popular literature. Olga Shapir was praised by the critics for her style, but her subject was seen as specifically related to women's issues.<sup>81</sup> Unlike Gippius, therefore, she was not viewed as part of the main current of literary developments. On the basis of the same criteria, many 'secondary' Finnish women writers of the period, as well as many less important male writers in both countries, have not been included in this study.

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genres. The absence of women writers from the established canon in Russia is also explored in Chap.4 of this study, on the basis of a comparison with Finnish women writers' work and its reception.

<sup>81</sup> Specific works by Verbitskaia, Nagrodskaia and Shapir, with short introductions about each author, are considered in Tatjana Antalovsky, *Der russische Frauenroman 1890-1917*, Munich, 1987.



### 0.3 Note on Editions and Translations

In the case of primary sources, the most complete recent editions of collected works available have been preferred. Where a given author's works have not been published in an edition of collected works, first editions have been used as far as possible.

All titles of literary works referred to in the text appear in their original form (Russian titles transliterated using the Library of Congress system, without diaerisis). Where they are mentioned for the first time, the titles are followed in brackets either by my translation (in inverted commas) or by a published English title if the work has been translated (in italics). In the latter case, the English title is also followed by the date of publication and this refers to the translation listed in the bibliography, after the list of primary sources. Where the title is a proper noun this is not repeated in brackets, unless the English translation uses a different transliteration of the name. The translations are those mentioned in the following bibliographies:

- Sulo Haltsonen and Rauni Puranen, *Kaunokirjallisuutemme käännöksiä: Bibliografinen luettelo suomenkielisen kaunokirjallisuuden käännöksistä*, Helsinki, 1979; for works of Finnish literature.
- Richard E. Lewanski, *The Literatures of the World in English Translation: A Bibliography, Volume II: The Slavic Literatures*, New York, 1967; for works of Russian literature. The more recent translations referred to are listed in the Marc Index of the Library of Congress Catalogue.

For the most part, the published English translations of Russian literature have not been used for quotation. The older translations are not only difficult to obtain, but in many cases they are so freely translated and edited that they are not sufficiently accurate for the nature of this study. Those (mostly more modern) versions which have been used are mentioned in full in the footnote in the first instance only. The main translations in this category are:

- Andrei Bely, *The Silver Dove*, trans. George Reavy, with a preface by Harrison E. Salisbury, New York, 1974.
- Aleksandr Blok, *The Rose and the Cross*, in Michael Green, ed. and trans., *The Russian Symbolist Theatre: An Anthology of Plays and Critical Texts*, Ann Arbor, 1986, pp.59-107.

- Ronald Hingley, ed. and trans., *The Oxford Chekhov*, London 1964-1978, Vols 7 (1978), 8 (1965) and 9 (1975); for Chekhov's stories.
- Anton Chekhov, *Plays*, trans. and introduced by Michael Frayn, London, 1988; for Chekhov's plays.
- Leo Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata and other stories*, trans. with an introduction by David McDuff, London, 1985.

In two cases the cited versions have been based on previous translations but have been substantially modified for the purposes of this study. These are:

- Maxim Gorky, *Mother*, trans. Margaret Wettlin, Moscow, 1954 (reprinted 1975).
- Leo Tolstoy, *Resurrection*, trans. with an introduction by Rosemary Edmonds, London, 1966 (reprinted 1988).

All translations of quotations from Finnish literature are my own.

Where published translations of secondary texts in either Finnish or Russian are used these are specified in the footnote, and the work is listed in the bibliography.



**PART I**  
**FEMALE EMANCIPATION**





## CHAPTER ONE

### 1 ACTION (I): Writers' Interpretations of Women's Issues

The nineteenth-century debate on the woman question engendered many works which were directly relevant to the course of feminist philosophy. John Stuart Mill's *On the Subjection of Women* (1869) came to exemplify the argument for women's emancipation.<sup>82</sup> In European literature, Flaubert's controversial novel *Madame Bovary*, the feminist writings of George Sand and the literary career of George Eliot had encouraged the discussion on woman's sexuality, psychology and independence. In the 1870s and 1880s, the striking portraits of Tolstoi's Anna Karenina, Ibsen's Nora and Strindberg's Miss Julie were immediately established as major studies of women's emotional life.

While they were specifically related to attitudes about women, works of this kind were also inseparable from the general polemic on social enlightenment, economic development and metaphysical well-being. The issues which had been raised by the question of woman's emancipation merged in literature with themes of political and individual freedom. In Finland and Russia, the social tableau from which writers drew their subjects broadened towards the end of the nineteenth century. The growing range of female types in fiction reflected a combination of writers' concern over women's issues and their views on national, social progress. The literary approach to the socio-political aspects of the woman question is concentrated in two, interdependent areas of the debate. First, writers addressed the problem of woman's education, from formative influences to formal institutions. Secondly, writers discussed woman's role in the economic structure, through marriage and employment, as well as within the power hierarchy.

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<sup>82</sup> Mill's work was extremely influential in both Finland and Russia, though at different times. It appeared in Russian translation as early as 1870. A Swedish translation appeared in Finland in 1883. See Stites, *op.cit.*, pp.73-75 for the Russian response; and Evans, *op.cit.*, p.19, for the Finnish view.



## 1.1 Literary Attitudes to Women's Education

### 1.1.1 Background: the Case for Women's Education

Widespread social enlightenment had been recognized as an indispensable part of political reform in nineteenth-century Finland and Russia. Formal education as well as didactic theory had been recurring themes in the philosophical polemic of both countries. Morally didactic children's stories counted among the volumes of many a prose writer. In trying to determine the proper nature of women's education, child development played the initial and most decisive role.<sup>83</sup> Women were perceived as the principal educators of children, first because of their role as mothers and secondly because of the various other child-caring duties they performed in their function of nurses, governesses or servants. Teaching was one of the first professions to be considered suitable for middle-class, unmarried women who could no longer be supported within the extended family. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, with growing research in the human sciences, the influence of women as child-carers on the psychological development of the future generation became one of the main points in the promotion of women's education.

Pedagogical concerns reflected more than just the changing attitudes about children, whose formative mental development had been largely ignored before the advent of psychology. In 1903, Nikolai Trubitsyn, analysing Dostoevskii's psychological portraits of children, emphasized the connection between the spiritual aspect of human existence and the memories and experiences of childhood, which form the individual's 'spiritual stance.'<sup>84</sup> This preoccupation with the individual's spiritual growth reflected a concern with the spiritual direction of the adult generation as representative of the nation.<sup>85</sup> This

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83 This attitude had a long history. See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, 'Women and the Enlightenment' in Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz, Susan Stuard, eds, *Becoming Visible - Women in European History*, 2nd ed., Boston, 1987, especially p.260 where the author writes: 'Throughout the age of Enlightenment and beyond, women's roles as mothers remained the primary justification for their education.'

84 N. Trubitsyn, *Dostoevskii i deti*, Kronstadt, 1903, p.1; 'духовный облик.'

85 See for example Tolstoi's articles on education, which reflect the contemporary debate, in Lev Tolstoi, *Sobranie sochinenii v dvadtsati dvukh tomakh*, Moscow, 1983, Vol.16. Writing on 'народное образование' ('popular education'), he stresses the connections between generation and nation, history and humanity (e.g. p.27). In praise of folk cultural models he states that the educational 'Прогрессисты же не могли бы



was often explicitly expressed in nineteenth century Finnish pedagogy.<sup>86</sup> Snellman's view had been that a child:

comes into immediate contact with living world history.(...) Education is a process whereby children are helped to participate in the knowledge and manners handed down to them by a particular nation at a particular time.<sup>87</sup>

Women were quick to support this universal and national goal of enlightenment in which they had become a target category. In Russia, as Richard Stites points out, arguments in favour of women's education were linked to the reform atmosphere of the late 1850s and early 1860s.<sup>88</sup> Feminists had agitated from this time on for entrance to medical and university-level courses. The repeated withdrawal and reinstatement of women's courses by the tsarist authorities right up to the First World War were both cause and consequence of women's participation in the radical movement. In Finland, one of the driving forces behind nationalism was the language movement. Its main goal was to establish equal status for the majority native language - Finnish - alongside Swedish, an ambition which was largely achieved by the 1880s through twenty years of constructive expansion of Finnish-language schools. Women's important contribution as teachers, in the resistance to cultural and linguistic russification (as well as to the dominance of Swedish), was frequently underlined in post-1880 feminist and liberal politics.

This is not to say that supporters of the women's rights movement only acknowledged women's issues in direct dependence to other aims for social improvement. Women's emancipation was part of a broad utopian vision, certainly, but women were also keenly aware of their own specific interests. There is a difference between seeking to change women's circumstances as a priority which will *ipso facto* improve all people's quality of life, and perceiving women's issues as an

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существовать без народа' ('The progressives would not even exist were it not for the nation') (p.87).

86 Iisalo, *op.cit.* Iisalo summarizes the views of the educational theorist Zachris Joachim Cleve as follows: '[the school] makes a young person into a human being, who will realize ideals both personally and socially. Starting from the customs of an individual family it is to aim at "universal truth" or general human ideals. The school must develop a nationalist way of thinking in its pupils, for patriotism is the best defence against internal and external violence.' p.48.

87 *ibid.*, p.43.

88 Stites, *op.cit.*, p.34.





inevitable but subordinate aspect of social progress. Women realized that education was the first hurdle in gaining the ability to function as independent, self-sufficient members of the community. Both left-wing and right-wing women addressed the issue of women's education as a prerequisite for redefining women's economic place in society. This was a time when a woman's financial alternatives often consisted of prostitution or manual labour on a wage which was lower than a man's or, for that matter, than a prostitute's. As Aleksandra Kollontai observed, bourgeois women in Russia struggled for university entrance because they were faced with the dilemma of poverty or winning the right to work:

The desire of bourgeois women to gain access to science and the higher benefits of culture was not the result of a sudden, maturing need but stemmed from that same question of "daily bread".<sup>89</sup>

Kollontai's first article, published in 1898, deals with the educational theories of Dobroliubov and the nature of environmental influence on children.<sup>90</sup> The article adheres to the views of Locke and Hume, rejecting the notion of inheritable tendencies, a notion which functioned as one of the most common arguments for preserving woman's narrow working existence as housewife. Over the following years, Kollontai wrote chiefly on workers' issues and the role of proletarian woman.<sup>91</sup> She campaigned for equality on the basis of the right to work and an independent income which would allow freedom in social and sexual interaction between men and women.<sup>92</sup> In Finland, where the first Finnish-language girls' school leading to university matriculation was founded in 1882, education was one of the issues most actively promoted by the leading campaigners for women's rights across the political spectrum. Female students in Finland were not satisfied with the permission they had been granted to audit university courses, a measure which answered the plea for general enlightenment but did not enable women to work within their chosen field of study. The very fact

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89 Aleksandra Kollontai, *Sotsial'nye osnovy zhenskogo voprosa*, St Petersburg, 1909, p.45; 'Стремление к науке, к высшим духовным благам, являлось вовсе не внезапно-созревшей в буржуазной женщине потребностью - это было все тот-же вопрос "куска хлеба".' Translation from Alix Holt, trans. and ed., *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai: with an introduction and commentaries*, London, 1977.

90 Cathy Porter, *Alexandra Kollontai*, London, 1980, p.39.

91 See bibliography of Kollontai's works in Holt, *op.cit.*, pp.321-37.

92 Porter, *op.cit.*, p.39.



that they were permitted to attend courses was often used to frustrate their demands for greater educational rights.<sup>93</sup> Women nevertheless campaigned persistently for the right to sit university exams.<sup>94</sup> Examinations, as well as teaching posts in colleges of higher education, required women to request 'special dispensation for their sex', a clause women increasingly employed for enrolling in university courses after 1885.<sup>95</sup>

The education of women was therefore a manifold issue at the end of the nineteenth century. Conservative objections to women's education continued to be raised in reaction to every newly won access to courses or establishments of learning, but the idea was widely endorsed in principle. It would improve the practical and moral standard a child would encounter in its early environment, leading to a more enlightened generation of adults. As such, the idea was firmly linked to the progressive political activity and ideology of the day. It was, more importantly for supporters of the woman's cause, the first expedient for improving woman's lot.

### 1.1.2 Child Development: Nature or Environment?

Writers approached the matter of women's educational development from a number of perspectives. In fiction, as in theory, child psychology provided the starting point for an appraisal of the meaning of education. The emphasis was on environmental influence, with the child most frequently cast as a victim of the brutal institutions of apparently civilized society.<sup>96</sup>

From the 1890s to the 1910s there are two authors in particular who favoured child protagonists, Fëdor Sologub in Russia and Teuvo Pakkala in Finland. It is interesting to observe that while these authors' works have little else in common in terms of thematic or stylistic context, the attitudes they reveal about male and female child

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93 Liisa Ketonen, *Suomen tyttöoppikoulut autonomian aikana*, Helsinki, 1977, p.60.

94 *ibid.*, p.60.

95 *ibid.*, p.113; 'erivapautus sukupuolestaan.'

96 Examples are Chekhov's *Spat' khochetsia* (1888, 'Sleepy'), Gippius' *Mest'* (1896, 'Revenge'), Kianto's *Poikarukka* (1909, 'Poor boy'), and Jotuni's *Anita* (1905), in which contact with the world of adult responsibilities or morality is injurious to the child.



development are remarkably consistent.<sup>97</sup> Historically, Pakkala's novels and short stories belong to Finnish realist tradition, while Sologub's are part of Russian symbolism or decadence. Pakkala concentrates on social description. He observes the conditions of life among the poorer classes, but his commentary on class conflict is implicit. Sologub by contrast examines at close quarters the more sinister power games of human relationships. Pakkala's child protagonists are more frequently girls, while Sologub's tend to be boys.<sup>98</sup> Both authors use fantasy to elaborate the child's perception of the world. The fantasy, no less than the reality, reiterates one important point: there are distinct expectations for the conduct of male and female children which it is dangerous to transgress.

The two authors' different stance on the actuality of the danger only underlines these expectations. In Sologub's work the danger is usually proved to exist. In his story *Svet i Teni* (1896, *The Wall and the Shadows*, 1977), the small boy Volodia's habit of playing with shadow images, an activity 'only fit for girls,' results in a menacing, harmful obsession.<sup>99</sup> Pakkala on the other hand suggests the danger is a fallacy. His characterization of Liisa as a tomboy in the novels *Vaaralla* (1891, 'At Vaara') and *Elsa* (1894) is a refutes the notion that boyish behaviour in a girl is destructive. The presence of 'feminine' qualities in boys invariably suggests perversity. They are indications of the feeble or the bizarre. The untypical behaviour of girls, perceived in terms of 'masculine' traits, is portrayed as positive. Even though it may be undesirable for social reasons, the essence of masculinity in a girl represents a superior 'normality' than is common to the female. Thus from a sociological standpoint, a child's natural, healthy instincts are somehow understood to be exemplified in the male. Volodia's concerned mother tells him it is wrong for him to be playing like a girl, and Liisa is scolded by her mother for enjoying boys' games; but in both

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97 The present comparison is founded on this relevant thematic basis. The usual canons for comparative literary studies (genre, style, influence) are often inappropriate to the female angle, since they themselves are born of the male literary canon.

98 This fact itself is worthy of some speculation. On a realist level, girls may have seemed to be more relevant subjects for Pakkala, as the most exploitable, least powerful members of the working classes. Could it also be, however, that certain assumptions about male/female active/passive roles are at work here? Pakkala's author-observer narrative objectifies his protagonist, while Sologub's authorial voice identifies subjectively with his protagonist. Another possibility is that as readers we only assume Sologub's narrative is more subjective precisely because it concerns boys.

99 Fëdor Sologub, *Svet i teni*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, St Petersburg, 1913, Vol.3, p.11; 'годная только для девочек.'



cases, it is the female aspect of the child which distresses the parent. Volodia's mother notices that her son has inherited her asymmetric head and worries that his 'femininity' will lead to weakness, which (characteristically for Sologub) is indeed carried to the extreme of mental infirmity. In Pakkala's novels no one fears that Liisa's boyish inclinations will lead to an 'unfeminine' strength, but that the failure to suppress her physical vitality will result in sexual misdemeanour.

This degeneracy of mind and body is perceived as the inevitable result of the unconstrained female character. A girl's 'bad' character is explained by heredity or her natural inclination to amorality. In Tolstoi's novel *Voskresenie* (1899, *Resurrection*, 1966) the eighteen-year-old Katiusha's seduction and consequent pregnancy is seen by her spinster guardians as evidence that 'she was depraved by nature, just like her mother.'<sup>100</sup> In Pakkala's stories, the daughters of prostitutes are understood to be condemned to the same fate as their mothers. Adults act in the conviction that a girl must be taught self-restraint from the earliest possible age in order to protect her from becoming 'a bad person', a frequently repeated epithet which clearly relates to sexual behaviour.<sup>101</sup>

In these novels, Pakkala and Tolstoi expose such assumptions as prejudice. They make explicit the role played by circumstance and environment rather than instinct. It seems the heroine does not fall but she is pushed.<sup>102</sup> It is not the individualistic Liisa who is seduced in Pakkala's novel, but the angelic Elsa. She, like Tolstoi's Katiusha, is impelled by the romanticized expectations of love with which she has been inculcated as much as by the man who persuades her. They are both given the final push, Katiusha into prostitution, Elsa into madness, by society's belief in their guilt.

The conditioning provided by the child's environment appears as the main culprit. While authors criticize the separate behavioural expectations of male and female, they maintain a view of separate behavioural response. The psychological portraits of girls show them as

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100 Tolstoi, *Voskresenie*, in, *op.cit.*, Vol. 13, p.70; 'была развращенная, такая же, как и мать.'

101 Teuvo Pakkala, *Elsa*, in *Kootut teokset*, Helsinki, 1921-22, Vol.2, e.g. p.63; 'huono ihminen'.

102 With regard to Tolstoi it must be said that the heroine is always ready to be pushed, and in this sense he maintains the view of natural inclination to amorality: *instinctively* women simply know no better, but it would be possible, in his view, to *train* them to know better, as we shall see. Tolstoi's criticism in *Voskresenie* is of male behaviour and social attitudes which do not protect or rescue women from their tendency to be 'pushed'.



passive receptacles of the social forces that surround them. Unable to resist them, they soon fuse with them in adulthood. The female lacks an active quality, possessed by the male, which would give her dimension in relief to her environment. Young men, whether cynical or complacent, are viewed as wilful agents of their behaviour.<sup>103</sup> Young women by contrast, are not so much corrupted by the negative influences around them as simply assimilated by them. This is the case with Tolstoi's Katiusha as well as Elsa's prostitute alter-ego, Mari, in Pakkala's novel. In Kuprin's story *Reka zhizni* (1906, *River of Life*, 1916), the thirteen year-old Alechka's precocity implies a carbon copy of her closest companion, a prostitute.<sup>104</sup> The naïvety of Leino's Jaana Rönty in his novel of the same name (1907) similarly makes her into a *tabula rasa* for a description of social ills. Despite any apparent role of agent in the narrative, such types express no essence of self. They equate with the objectified world depicted by the author. Alechka and Jaana are neither without knowledge nor without innocence. Neither in conflict nor in harmony with their environment, they simply are their environment.<sup>105</sup>

The absence of an active dimension in the female personality does not exclude the notion of women's manipulative intent. Alechka's 'strange, modest, tender and simultaneously sensual, somehow expectant smile' is a practised instinct.<sup>106</sup> In Kuprin's story *Molokh* (1896) Nina displays this quality more explicitly:

Bobrov's loving gaze fixed upon her - all this electrified her into the state in which hysterical natures lie with such charm and inspiration, and so unwittingly.(...) Nina realized by her infallible feminine intuition that just then Kvashnin was looking at her and talking about her.<sup>107</sup>

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103 Examples of this are Serge in Gippius' play *Zelënoe kol'tso* (1915, *The Green Ring*, 1920), who is not corrupted by participating in the official system of education, and the title character of Kallas' *Ants Raudjalg* (1907), who resists the implications of his heritage of serfdom.

104 Aleksandr Kuprin, *Reka zhizni*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, Moscow, 1957-58, Vol.4. See p.66 for description of Alechka.

105 It is significant that, despite widespread recognition of the unwholesome nature of girls' upbringing at the end of the nineteenth century, the most elaborate studies of depersonification through education and environment are never studies of women. For example both Leino and Andreev, for whom this is a major theme, cast women as a life-force in the external environment with which men alone interact.

106 Kuprin, *Reka zhizni*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.66; 'улыбается странной, скромной, нежной и в то же время сладострастной - какой-то ожидающей улыбкой.'

107 Kuprin, *Molokh*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, pp.39-40; 'на себе влюбленный взгляд Боброва - все это наэлектризовало ее до того состояния, в котором истеричные натуры лгут так



For Tolstoi especially, it is women's peculiar perversity that they are unconsciously calculating. It is the hunter's instinct of husband seekers like Missi in *Resurrection*, who:

had trained herself [приучила себя] to believe that he would be hers (not that she would belong to him, but that he would belong to her), and she pursued her ambitions with the unconscious but persistent cunning of the spiritually afflicted.<sup>108</sup>

Tolstoi's bracketed comment underlines the aberration in Missi's marital aims. Herein lies the argument in favour of women's re-education. Both Finnish and Russian writers portray girls as spirited, alert, adventurous and full of promise, but growing up in a society which condemns such behaviour as unsuitable. In *Papin tytär* (1885, 'The priest's daughter'), Aho, like Tolstoi, rejects the creation of well-bred ladies, of useless porcelain dolls, in favour of a more personally fulfilling upbringing. Authors see the natural vitality of childhood as a positive form of equality between boys and girls. However, just as this equality does not challenge a preconception of male-female active-passive response, neither does it challenge the status quo in adulthood. The meaning of personal fulfilment for Aho's Elli in *Papin tytär* will not extend beyond the desire for her own submission in love.<sup>109</sup> It is true that Pakkala's tomboy Liisa continues to be exceptional in adulthood, in that she resists hypocritical morality, but her life and ambitions remain a model of convention: she is, and wants no more than to be a devoted wife and mother. Pakkala's message is that playing boys games will not stop girls from wanting to play house in the future.<sup>110</sup> This is the case for women's enlightenment expressed by both Finnish and Russian writers. In their aspirations to become a wife and mother, women should learn in childhood to be governed by sincere, realistic love,

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вдохновенно, так пленительно и так незаметно для самих себя. (...) Нина безошибочным женским чутьем поняла, что именно на нее смотрит Квашнин и о ней говорит в настоящую минуту.'

108 Tolstoi, *Voskresenie*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.13, pp.98-99; 'приучила себя к мысли, что он будет ее (не она будет его, а он ее), и она с бессознательной, но упорной хитростью, такую, какая бывает у душевнобольных, достигала своей цели.'

109 Explored in the sequel to *Papin tytär*, *Papin rouva* (1893, 'The priest's wife').

110 Liisa also appears as the protagonist in Pakkala's story *Poikatyttö* (1895, 'Tomboy'), where she enjoys horse riding and scrapes with the boys, but her dream is to become a seaman's wife (Pakkala, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.343).



rather than by the dictates of finance and reputation among the rich, or of ignorance and illusion among the poor.

The appeal in literature for more enlightened wives and mothers echoes the most often used feminist defence of a more liberal education for girls. One author to add a more complex interpretation of how girls grow into women is Minna Canth in Finland. In her play *Sylvi* (1893), the title heroine also reflects an instinct of childish wilfulness combined with a yearning for wifely submissiveness. Canth's message differs from Pakkala's however, in that unlike Liisa, Sylvi is unable to reconcile these elements of her personality. Sylvi gradually displays a mental unbalance characterized by schizophrenic symptoms: withdrawal from reality, delusion, social apathy and emotional instability. Canth demonstrates that schizophrenia is woman's environmental training, imposed by the conflicting identity roles she is expected to adopt. Sylvi is eighteen, with a husband, Aksel, eighteen years her senior. She is visited by a childhood friend, Viktor, with whom she falls in love. She is constantly referred to as 'little Sylvi,' 'little cousin,' or 'my little wife' by the men who are close to her. These men allow her no adult social participation, but demand that she conform to their adult social code. She must simply obey, like a child, without any recognition of her will.<sup>111</sup> Failing to assert her identity as a woman, she will subside into a permanent, insane childhood by the end of the play, repeating 'it's me, your little pussycat.'<sup>112</sup> Canth often explores woman's identity as a struggle between the roles she is given as a 'child', devoid of legal and social rights to determine the course of her life, and as an adult, considered fully responsible for her fate.<sup>113</sup>

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111 In the dialogue between Aksel and Sylvi, Sylvi repeatedly uses the first person pronoun *minä*, the use of which is emphatic in Finnish. Axel's speech is a sequence of expression typical of a parent scolding a child. Minna Canth, *Sylvi*, in *Kootut teokset*, Helsinki, 1917-20, Vol.4, pp.220-22. Later, in response to comments on the play's feminist themes, Canth expressed her hope that the play might bear an influence on raising the legal marriageable age. See Canth, *Kirjeitä vuosilta 1860-1897*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.5, p.464.

112 *ibid.*, p.251; 'minä se olen, pikku kissimirri.'

113 This theme is arguably the single most consistent current in Canth's work, although there is no comprehensive study of it. Other explicit examples of 'child' status in adulthood can be found in *Salakari* (1887, 'Submerged reef') and *Papin perhe* (1891, 'The priest's family'); implicit examples are in *Työmiehen vaimo* (1885, 'The worker's wife') and *Anna Liisa* (1895). The implication is that disallowed any adult status except as the guilty party, women are effectively denied existence. Where women try to exist (through acts of despair), they are banished from society in death, madness or prison.



### 1.1.3 Woman as a Role Model

The point Canth makes finds a parallel in literature. If the wrong educational models are to be found in the child's environment, then it is mothers above all who are held to be the guilty party. While the maternal instinct may be idealized as woman's vocational role, it is precisely the mother who appears invariably as a bad influence on children, and specifically on girls. Reasons for this differ in emphasis between Finland and Russia. Canth in particular, as well as Pakkala, Talvio and Aho, argue that woman's negative influence stems from her powerlessness. Aho and Pakkala emphasize the fears, often fostered by religious belief, that cause women to force their daughters into the same state of subjection as themselves. The authors' argument is against ignorance and prejudice. Talvio presents another view of ignorance in *Muuan äiti* (1904, 'Any mother'). The mother of the story finds she is helpless in the face of her son's sexual impropriety. She has both awareness and moral judgement, but her knowledge is powerless: society demands that she pretend ignorance. This sense of guilty inadequacy also characterizes the mothers in Canth's plays *Papin perhe* and *Anna Liisa* (1895).

Russian writers, by contrast, mainly portray woman's destructive impulse within the family as her capacity to influence. The forceful wife and mother appears, for example, in the work of Tolstoi, Gor'kii and Kuprin. She is a type cast in the mould of the mother in Strindberg's tragedy *Fadren* (1887, 'The Father'), who combines the capacity for self-interest and sacrifice. The mother figure is selfishly motivated on behalf of her child. The maternal instinct is essentially positive, but it has the potential to become perversely channelled, as in the many over-bearing mothers of Sologub's stories. The strength of this instinct can be the source of a ruthless matriarchal dominance which functions against the interests of the children in the long run. In Gor'kii's play *Vassa Zheleznova* (1910), the mother's energy is directed at acquiring the family wealth, at the expense of the mental and physical health of her offspring.<sup>114</sup> For Tolstoi, the real perniciousness lies in the mother's misconception of a child's best interest. In *Voskresenie*, the wife of

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114 The reference is to the first version of the play, which was revised in the 1930s. The subtitle to the play is 'a mother,' and Vassa Zheleznova is the antithesis of 'the mother', the sacrificial, universal, earth-mother type Gor'kii idealizes in his novel *Mat'* (1906-08, *Mother*, 1954).



Senator Selenin brings up her daughter according to the vanities of high society. In such cases, the sexual morality of this type becomes questionable. Selenin's wife refuses to have more than one child, which in Tolstoi signifies both promiscuity and unnaturalness.<sup>115</sup> Similarly, Kuprin hints at the promiscuity of Nina's mother in *Molokh*, a woman whose main concern is the marriage market for her daughters. As a role model, the authors maintain, this type teaches prostitution.

#### 1.1.4 Woman as Man's Pupil

Woman's distorted and distorting view of the world is part of the argument for her moral enlightenment. Tolstoi writes:

women know perfectly well that the most elevated love - the most "poetic", as we call it - depends not on moral qualities but on physical proximity and also on things like hair-style, or the colour and the cut of a dress.<sup>116</sup>

If women set a bad example, men are guilty by neglect. Tolstoi's 'women who know' are those 'who've undergone the "education" provided by men.'<sup>117</sup> The notion that it is men who have the ability and perception to improve women's moral character emerges in both Finnish and Russian literature. Elli of Aho's *Papin rouva* finds her mind expanded by her conversations with Olavi Kalm, the young student she falls in love with amid discussions about modern heroines such as Tolstoi's Anna Karenina or Ibsen's Nora. Elli is stifled by her loveless marriage. Her fulfilment would lie in her having the right male guardian. Likewise, the title heroine of Järnefelt's novel *Helena* (1902) develops her social conscience in relation to the men she meets. Helena is more independent of thought than the average Russian heroine, but her attempts at action fail until, as a wife, she takes on a supportive rather than a determining role. Helena is the ideal of the 'woman who stands

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115 In other words, Tolstoi's view of contraception, rather than chastity, as elaborated in *Posleslovie k 'Kreitzerovoi sonate'* (Postface to *The Kreutzer Sonata*, 1985), in *op.cit.*, Vol.12, pp.197-211.

116 Tolstoi, *Kreitzerova sonata* (1889, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, 1985), in *op.cit.*, Vol.12, p.138; 'женщины же знают очень хорошо что самая возвышенная, поэтическая, как мы ее называем, любовь зависит не от нравственных достоинств, а от физической близости и притом прически, цвета, покроя платья.' Translation of this and all subsequent quotations from the novel are from the version in *The Kreutzer Sonata and other stories*, trans. David McDuff, London, 1985.

117 *ibid.*, p.139; 'особенно, прошедшие мужскую школу.'



behind every good man'. Women writers are more sceptical about the idea of a solution in male guardianship. As already shown, Canth's play *Sylvi* demonstrates that even the most loving, sincere male protection falls far short of woman's need for her own freedom. Neither Sylvi's husband nor her admirer is capable of acting in her interest. Sylvi cannot be socialized by these men, because the only choice they offer her in adulthood is the denial of her self. She poisons her husband in a desperate attempt to break from paternal guardianship. In jail, she is left physically on the periphery of society. Mad, she is left on the periphery of humanity. For having tried to determine her own course in life, in both mind and body Sylvi's existence has been eliminated.

The romantic woman disciple of intellectual man has a noticeable tradition in nineteenth-century Russian literature, from Pushkin's Tatiana to Turgenev's Elena.<sup>118</sup> No less than the morally corrupt woman, she too is in effect no more than a receptacle of external forces. The added quality of her restlessness, the cliché of social guilt, is simply one of these forces. The sum of her action lies in the adoption of the philosophical convictions of the man she loves, not in the development of her own intellectual conclusions. Of Tatiana and Elena, Joe Andrew accurately uses the analogy 'Sleeping Beauties'.<sup>119</sup> This type of heroine is parodied in Chekhov's *Dushechka* (1898, *Angel*, 1975). The story's protagonist, Olenka, speaks with the words and thinks the thoughts of her various husbands. Chekhov's irony is astute: Olenka's personality equates with her environment, and she remains a blank page even for the reader.<sup>120</sup> Olenka's portrait is absurd. Her adherence to each husband's opinions is as fatuous as the opinions themselves are inane. More often, this pattern is a serious didactic model for woman's enlightenment. A male hero contributes the knowledge which the female adopts thanks to an instinct rooted in love. In Tolstoi's *Voskresenie*, it is the hero Nekhliudov who will bring moral enlightenment to Katiusha Maslova. Through his efforts she rejects her life of prostitution. Nekhliudov's own resurrection is provoked by his realization of the consequences of his actions (his carefree seduction of

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118 See for example Joe Andrew, *Women in Russian Literature 1780-1863*, London, 1988. As the author aptly points out in the case of Elena: 'she is the pupil, the man is the teacher.' (p.154)

119 *ibid.*, p.154.

120 Of Olenka, Barbara Heldt has remarked: 'Chekhov has given us an outline of a character that we fill in as we like.' Barbara Heldt, *Terrible Perfection*, p.52.



Katiusha). His is a moral and intellectual rebirth with definite socio-political implications. Maslova's resurrection is a purely emotional rehabilitation, the result of her rekindled love for Nekhliudov. Similarly, even the title heroine of Gor'kii's novel *Mat'* (1908, *Mother*, 1954), the period's most established literary model of female political enlightenment, undergoes an instinctive, rather than rational, education, with her son as the teacher.

If love can make a woman see the light, then it is man's duty to awaken that love. Men are seen to fail in their educational responsibilities towards women when they neglect the teacher-pupil love relationship. In Chekhov's *Volodia bolshoi i Volodia malenkii* (1893, *The Two Volodyas*, 1978) Sofia states:

I'm an insignificant, worthless, immoral, half-witted woman. I've made masses and masses of mistakes, I'm a nervous wreck, I'm corrupt so I deserve contempt. But you're ten years older than me Volodya, aren't you? And my husband's thirty years older. You watched me grow up, and if you wanted you could have made anything of me you liked – an angel, even.<sup>121</sup>

### 1.1.5 Formal Education: the Russian View

In Chekhov's story, Sofia complains of the level of the younger Volodia's conversation with her:

"You're a successful scholar, you love academic work, but why oh why do you never speak to me of that? Am I unworthy?"  
 "Whence this sudden yearning for scholarship?" Small Volodia frowned irritably. "Perhaps you yearn for constitutional government? Or perhaps you'd prefer sturgeon with horseradish?"<sup>122</sup>

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121 Anton Chekhov, *Volodia bolshoi i Volodia malen'kii*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v tridsati tomakh*, Moscow, 1974-1982, Vol.8, p.223; 'я ничтожная, дрянная, безпринципная, недалекая женщина... У меня тьма, тьма ошибок, я психопатка, испорченная, и меня за это презирать надо. Но ведь вы, Володя, старше меня на десять лет, а муж старше меня на тридцать лет. Я росла на ваших глазах, и если бы вы захотели, то могли бы сделать из меня все, что вам угодно, хоть ангела.' Translation of this and all subsequent quotations from Chekhov's stories are taken from Ronald Hingley, ed. and trans., *The Oxford Chekhov*, London, 1964-78, Vols 7: *Stories 1893-1895* (1978); 8: *Stories 1895-1897* (1965); 9: *Stories 1898-1904* (1975).

122 *ibid.*, p.223; 'Вы имеете успех как ученый, вы любите науку, но отчего вы никогда не говорите со мной о науке? Отчего? Я недостойна?

Володя маленький досадливо поморщился и сказал:  
 - Отчего это вам так вдруг науки захотелось? А, может, хотите конституции? Или, может, севрюжины с хреном?'



Chekhov's portrait of Volodia is sarcastic, but it accurately reflects the common attitude towards the level and usefulness of women's formal higher education in Russia. At their most positive, women's courses or teaching posts are presented simply as a descriptive motif of the female revolutionary. Otherwise, woman's intellectual improvement is usually portrayed as the rather misguided indulgence of the moneyed classes. Books offer scant comfort in the absence of romantic love, and are far from being the tools of woman's emancipation. Tolstoi's dismissal of women's education is based on his belief that, like all other forms of official equality, it is irrelevant so long as woman remains 'an instrument of pleasure'.<sup>123</sup> The majority of women are:

mentally ill, hysterical and unhappy, as are all those who are denied the opportunity of spiritual development.

Schools and universities can do nothing to change this.(...) The fact that this one is rather good at mathematics, and that one can play the harp – that alters nothing.<sup>124</sup>

Tolstoi is making no comment on women's inherent capacity to be educated or to participate in other aspects of public life, but on the fact that the crux of the problem of equality lies in woman's sexuality. The solution in Tolstoi's view is chastity, and woman's recognition of her own virginity as the highest state. For:

As long as this is lacking, the ideal of every girl, no matter how well educated, will be to attract as many men, as many males, as she can.<sup>125</sup>

The link Tolstoi repeatedly makes between women's marital ambitions and their erudition raises a germane question: what indeed is the point of educating women? Tolstoi's view is double edged. Prophetic in its statement that an extension of legal rights will not automatically lead to a change of attitudes, it also suggests that these rights themselves are superfluous to women. Writers are concerned with the education of

123 Tolstoi, *Kreitserova sonata*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.12, p.154; 'орудие наслаждения'.

124 *ibid.*, p.155; 'больной душевно, истеричной, несчастной, какие они и есть, без возможности духовного развития.'

Гимназии и курсы не могут изменить этого.(...) А то, что одна побольше знает математики, а другая умеет играть на арфе, - это ничего не изменит.'

125 *ibid.*, p.155; 'Пока же этого нет, идеал всякой девушки, какое бы ни было ее образование, будет все-таки тот, чтобы привлечь к себе как можно больше мужчин, как можно больше самцов.'



wives, not independent women. The suggestion of woman's knowledge outside marriage even implies lack of respectability. A Russian euphemism for a brothel was a 'boarding school'. Kuprin uses the idiom in his novel *Iama* (1909-1916, *The Pit*, 1924), set in a brothel, when he refers to the prostitutes as 'boarding school misses'.<sup>126</sup>

Education alone provides no solution, but a more enlightened approach to a woman's mental and emotional development can provide happiness. In Gor'kii's novel *Foma Gordeev* (1899, *Foma Gordeyev*, 1955), the main female protagonist Liuba, like the title hero, is alienated from the values of her merchant class. She seeks answers in books. These confirm her dissatisfaction with her role in life but do not help her to cultivate her own identity. Foma considers Liuba's words to be 'false and borrowed'.<sup>127</sup> Books fail to satisfy her longing for romantic love. The eventual match she makes will resolve her discontent because of her fiancé's appreciation of her erudite mind. Unlike Foma, who suffers from the irreconcilable angst of the socially conscious Russian hero, Liuba finds a happy compromise in marriage.

Gor'kii's portrait of Liuba is sympathetic, despite her final acceptance of the merchant class and despite Gor'kii's reserve over the value of her reading. Gor'kii shows us that Liuba is sincere, and that her discontent with the commercial nature of marriage is justified. We must assume that her enlightenment, as well as her destiny, is 'according to the measure' of her womanhood. On many occasions, such intellectual self-improvement is simply ridiculed. Some of the most satirical portraits of educated woman are to be found in Gippius' work. Gippius not only suggests the total inadequacy of the female intellect, but also implies that the application of knowledge is simply a modern facet of traditional feminine vanity. In her story *Odinokii* (1896, 'Lonely'), Gippius paints the portrait of an earnest, ordinary young girl who, although she did not complete her schooling, reads Spencer, Hume

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126 Kuprin, *Iama*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.5, p.22; 'как институтки' and p.24, where the atmosphere of the brothel is marked with the same 'hysterical sentimentality as in female boarding schools' ('истеричная сентиментальность, как и в женских пансионах'). See also Chap.6 (pp.35-43), in which the dialogue between a male teacher client and the prostitutes reproduces the impression of a classroom.

127 Maksim Gor'kii, *Foma Gordeev*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, Moscow, 1960-63, Vol.3, p.101; 'чужими ей и бестолковыми'.



and Mill. She joins in discussions on 'the most abstract subjects'.<sup>128</sup> Her indulgence in 'serious' literature is shown to be an affectation which:

did not prevent her from arguing with her younger brother over chocolates, from dancing at balls, or from enjoying novels very much indeed.<sup>129</sup>

Likewise the governess in the story *Kaban* (1897, 'Wild boar') is portrayed with the usual irony which Gippius applies to her female characters who consider themselves well-informed:

Liudmila Fedorovna already informed me that she would be attending the higher courses for women in the autumn, and that generally her brother had "opened her eyes" and "shown her the way".<sup>130</sup>

Subsequently, Liudmila confesses that she does not understand the rationalist books her brother lends her. A classic stereotype of the 'clever' woman of the petty bourgeoisie appears in Kuprin's *Molokh*:

Beta was considered intelligent, wore a pince-nez, and, they said, had even hoped to attend courses at some time.<sup>131</sup>

In conversation Beta has all the skill of a belligerent elephant.<sup>132</sup>

#### 1.1.6 Formal Education: the Finnish View

Kuprin's association of Beta with women's courses mocks the ambitions of women like Beta as well as the nature of women's education. Beta's type of small-minded, small-town, spinster intellectual also makes her appearance in Finnish writing, as in the minor character of Mili Mellin in Talvio's *Muuan äiti*. For the most part, however, Finnish writers are much less prepared to criticize the value of formal education. The institution itself is seen as progressive.

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128 Gippius, *Odinokii*, in *Novye Liudi*, St Petersburg, 1896 p.375, 'о самых отвлеченных предметах'.

129 *ibid.*, p.375; 'это не мешала ей ссориться с братом гимназистом из-за съеденных конфет, танцовать на балах и очень любить романы.'

130 Gippius, *Kaban*, in *Tret'ia kniga rasskazov*, St Petersburg, 1901 p.273; 'Людмила Федоровна уже сообщила мне, что осенью она едет на высшие женские курсы и что вообще брат "открыл ей глаза" и "указал путь".'

131 Kuprin, *Molokh*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.15; 'Бета считалась умницей, носила пенсне и, как говорили, хотела даже когда-то поступить на курсы.'

132 *ibid.*, p.16.



Where women are concerned, its shortcomings lie in the opportunities for applying the knowledge they acquire. In her story *Laulaja* (1895, 'The Singer'), Canth contrasts the fates of a daughter and an adopted son. The author demonstrates that women's careers are pre-determined by the domestic responsibilities they bear, regardless of their education. The daughter was an exceptional student at school, but is left to care for and support her mother on her meagre earnings, while her rich, adopted brother, a wastrel throughout his childhood, enjoys international fame, and travel, as a singer. It is not female education which is to blame, but the narrow destiny which has been reserved for women. In this sense Canth's view is a reversal of Tolstoi's. Tolstoi asks what is the point of educating women when there is a much more pressing, unresolved element of inequality (notably sexual exploitation). Canth asks how can so many aspects of inequality (notably economic exploitation) still exist when education proves that women are equally capable and intelligent.

Knowledge represents liberation in Canth's work, while the home is both a literal and allegorical materialization of woman's imprisonment. In her story and play *Kotoa pois* (story 1893, play 1895, 'Away from home'), Canth's faith in education also outweighs the attraction of marriage. Like Liuba in Gor'kii's *Foma Gordeev*, Fanny finds that her potential groom is not antipathetic to her. Unlike Liuba however, the educated Fanny categorically rejects marriage as an intolerable, humiliating trade within the merchant class, in favour of a career as a school teacher in a remote village. Canth suggests that the geographical isolation will not be so great as the isolation of marriage. Fanny's choice is a necessity both personally (she herself will not be sold), and politically (she will not participate in the institution of marriage as a trade), in order to maintain her sense of self. Liuba (Gor'kii) believes in enlightened marriage. Fanny (Canth) is not convinced.

The positive value of education is also underlined in Pakkala's portrayal of Elsa's mother in *Elsa*, a widow who is able to read and write, and who puts her skill to use in the community when it is needed. Among the poorer classes in general, it is frequently women, rather than men, who are able to read. This is particularly so in works which appear later in the period, such as Kianto's novel *Punainen viiva* (1909, 'The Red Mark') or Jotuni's story *Aappo* (1913). In both cases, reading ability signifies contact with the outside world. In Kianto's novel, the rural



community acquires knowledge of the new polling regulations from a shoemaker's wife who reads the newspaper. In Jotuni's story, the title hero learns about foreign lands from Anna, a young woman who reads regularly to him and to others. When Anna is courted, Aappo realizes 'now they took the reader, the reader', and he marries her himself.<sup>133</sup>

This detail in these works reflects a social reality. They describe the effects of women's reading groups established in the Finnish countryside in the 1890s. Although a positive value is placed on woman's ability to read and write, one must not overestimate its meaning for women's independence. Above all, the value of this skill appears in its service to the community. These women, of the rural and working classes, transmit knowledge to others. As such their function has class, rather than gender significance. Nevertheless, they also benefit personally from their skill. In Jotuni's story, 'Anna was given the official duty of reader.'<sup>134</sup> Anna, and the shoemaker's wife in Kianto's novel, are both given identity by their roles as 'readers', in the way that careers generally identify men's social place. Books are symbols of hope rather than disillusion in Finnish writing. To give up books is to resign one's identity. In Talvio's novel *Pimeän pirtin hävitys* (1901, 'Destroying the dark farmhouse'), a woman burning her books symbolizes her abandonment of her ideals and the denial of her personality.

Formal education does have a negative side when it is associated with the idea of good breeding as opposed to learning. This is expressed uniquely as a non-Finnish phenomenon: it is the mannerism of central European culture. Aho criticizes the mannered schooling girls receive at Swedish speaking schools, and Järnefelt paints a negative portrait of European, particularly French, cultural education.<sup>135</sup> It is the cosmopolitan centres of the Russian Empire which receive the severest criticism. In Canth's novel *Agnes* (1895), the title heroine was the most promising pupil at her school in Finland, but is transformed into a sort of superfluous woman after participating in the frivolous life-style of St Petersburg. In Leino's short novel *Seikkailijatar* (1913, 'The

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133 Maria Jotuni, *Aappo*, in *Kootut Teokset*, Helsinki, 1930, Vol.1, p.180; 'Lukijan, lukijan ne nyt tästä veivät'.

134 *ibid.*, p.179; 'Anna sai toimittaa lukijan virkaa.'

135 Aho's unschooled Elli in *Papin tytär* contrasts favourably with the doll-like, obedient Tyyra Hedwig. In Järnefelt's novel, Helena's spirited personality is attributed to her lack of education.



adventuress'), a satire of Russian life and literature, the clue to the heroine Zaïda's decadent tendencies lies in the fact that her father sent her to the city to receive an education. The father, a farmer from the Caucasus, was adamant that 'first Zaïda must acquire an education, an education.'<sup>136</sup> It is an education (*sivistys*) which consists of foreign languages and liqueurs, French and Italian songs, and fashions from Vienna. Leino parodies the Europeanization of Russian culture. The adventuress' true lesson in decadence begins when she elopes to St Petersburg.

### 1.1.7 Conclusion

Above all, it is the attitude towards women's formal education which differs between Finland and Russia. This reflects writers' differing attitudes towards the nature of women's enlightenment as an element of universal and national progress. Themes which relate to women's educational potential are duplicated in the literatures of both countries. The equal vitality of girls, woman as a perpetuator of negative influences, and man's guiding role are all features of the general view of woman's educational progress.

The subject of formal education highlights the extent to which women's issues became integrated into the general progressive ideology of each nation. In Russia, formal education represented the establishment, and therefore came under attack for its inadequacies. While writers recognized the need for enlightenment, institutionalized education was seen as part of a massive, immovable bureaucracy breeding mediocrity. Portraits of teachers tend to express the idea that social control, and the nation's spiritual direction, are in the hands of the incompetent.<sup>137</sup> In Finland, education was a literal and accessible economic necessity, and therefore represented progress rather than stagnation. The linguistic element, itself at the root of national awakening, also gave education symbolic meaning. Institutions which

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136 Eino Leino, *Seikkailijatar*, in *Kootut teokset*, Helsinki, 1929-31, Vol.12, p.6; 'ennen täytyy Zaïdan saada sivistystä, sivistystä.'

137 See Chekhov's portraits of teachers, e.g. *Uchitel' slovesnosti* (1894, *The Russian Master*, 1978), *Na podvode*, (1897, *In the Cart*, 1965), and *Chelovek v futliare* (1898, *A Hard Case*, 1975), or Bunin's and Sologub's portrayals of schools, e.g. *Legkoe dykhanie* (1916, *Light breathing*, 1923) and *Melkii bes* (1907, *The Petty Demon*, 1983) respectively.



encourage learning represented a facet of cultural resistance to russification.<sup>138</sup>

In Finland, the female school teacher symbolizes not only a capacity for independence but also a source of social progress. The narrator of Aho's story *Hovineuvoksetar* (1899, 'The judge's wife') is a female schoolteacher collecting money for books. She states:

it is precisely we, the teachers and educators of our people, who can achieve the most at this time.<sup>139</sup>

The gulf between intellectuals and the 'people' was much greater in Russia. This left many idealists with a sense of impotence, expressed by Chekhov in his story *Dom s mezoninom* (1896, *The Artist's Story*, 1965). The narrator feels Lidiia's teaching and social work is an empty achievement. He states:

It's not reading our people need, it's freedom to develop their spiritual powers.<sup>140</sup>

## 1.2 Literary Reflections of Women's Role in the Economic Structure

### 1.2.1 Background: Women's Employment Status

Whatever its spiritual significance for the nation, teaching was a suitable job for a woman. As has been shown, woman's education was inseparable from her function in society. This function began to take on increasing economic importance as women entered the job market. While motherhood in marital dependence was still perceived as woman's natural ambition, the issue of woman's employment was central to both socialist and conservative campaigns for women's rights. Liberal right-wing politics recognized the problem of the unmarried

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138 Kianto's story *Kuntakokous Pimeäjärvellä* ('District meeting in Pimeäjarvi') in the collection *Pikku syntejä* (1909, 'Minor Sins') stresses the importance of maintaining a village library as a small but vital step towards greater autonomy.

139 Juhani Aho, *Hovineuvoksetar*, in *Kootut teokset*, Helsinki, 1952-54, Vol.6, p.150; 'juuri me kansan opettajat ja kansan kasvattajat, tätä nykyä eniten voimme.' The teacher is one of only three female portraits (the others are identified as a mother and a widow) in the collection *Katajainen kansani* (1899, 'My people of juniper') which contains over forty prose pieces in support of the national cause.

140 Chekhov, *Dom s mezoninom*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.9, p.186; 'Не грамотность нужна, а свобода для широкого проявления духовных способностей.'



woman's means of support. Paid work for women had become a necessary alternative to the unpaid work of wives and mothers. The move towards industrialization meant the gradual disappearance of an assured economic dependence for the unmarried women of the propertied classes. At the same time, women with an education could no longer be satisfied with the narrow destiny defined by marriage.

August Bebel's *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (1879) became one of the most influential and often quoted works in defence of woman's right to work.<sup>141</sup> Together with the writings of Clara Zetkin, it set the tone of the woman's movement on the left. In Russia, Bebel and Zetkin inspired Nadezhda Krupskaya's underground work *Zhenshchina-rabotnitsa* (1901, 'The Woman Worker'), which emphasized the plight of peasant women and women factory workers.<sup>142</sup> In Finland, the Women's Workers Union, founded in 1900, gradually moulded its political outlook in line with Bebel and Zetkin as their works appeared in translation.<sup>143</sup> The socialist debate centered on how to protect women from economic exploitation. Keeping women in the home was seen by some as a valid alternative, but the economic realities of early industrialized society meant that the only practical option was to offer women better conditions of employment. Their legal rights, opportunities through education, maternity considerations, and safety in dangerous industries became the major immediate pragmatic concerns. This was the broad, international socialist attitude during the period from 1889 to 1914.<sup>144</sup>

Within socialist and liberal theory the question of employment for women was firmly founded on women's basic need to work in order to live. The link between work and poverty as a socio-economic issue ran alongside the link between work and liberation in philosophical enquiry. For women, the issue appeared twofold: economic independence could confer equality just as labour itself could confer human dignity. Feminists sought personal fulfilment in useful endeavour. Women socialists stressed the liberating possibilities of

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141 For an outline of Bebel's work and the influence of Bebel and Zetkin in Russia see Stites, *op.cit.*, pp.233-43. For a similar assessment in the Finnish context see Sylvi Kyllikki Kilpi, *Suomen työläisnaisliikkeen historia*, Pori, 1953, pp.65-70. Bebel's work was translated into Russian by at least 1895 and into Finnish in 1903.

142 Stites, *op.cit.*, p.241.

143 Helena Laisi, 'Suomen vanhasta työläisnaisliikkeestä' in *Naiskuvista todellisuuteen: tutkimusnäkökulmia naishistoriaan*, Helsinki, 1984, p.114.

144 Evans, *op.cit.*, p.159.



work. But it was also true that most conditions of work conferred very little human dignity on either men or women. The history of woman's employment reveals just how elusive economic independence remained, despite the newly emerging social group of professional and working women. In both Finland and Russia, the majority of women in paid employment at the end of the nineteenth century worked as domestic servants. Historians of both countries have pointed out the slave-like conditions of work in this sector.<sup>145</sup> Neither was employment an easy solution for those with an education. In both Finland and Russia, the pre-industrial period created a gap in the employment market. Access to professions remained difficult as prejudices over women's capabilities persisted.

Nevertheless, women's labour, traditionally invisible, acquired a more obvious profile in the economic structure. A vision of independence from the dual yoke of poverty and man provoked women's search for a place in society outside the home. In Russia, urbanization had taken the peasant woman into the factories. The telegraph service came to be identified as a woman's occupation, initially providing work for female relatives of male employees. University-level courses produced a number of physicians, teachers, lawyers and engineers.<sup>146</sup> In Finland, women also entered the textile and tobacco factories. They worked in various administrative posts in teaching, banks, and in the telephone, telegraph and railway services. Women constituted a large percentage of the labour force in the timber industry after the abolition of child labour.<sup>147</sup>

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145 With reference to Russia see Stites, *op.cit.*, pp.161-62. The author concludes that 'as a group, female servants were among the most rightless people in Russia.' With reference to Finland see Johanna Mannila-Kaipainen, 'Palvelijan työn merkitys naisten vapauttamiselle: Siisti, rehellinen kotiapulainen saa paikan' in *Naiskuvista todellisuuteen*, pp.124-29. Although servants in Finland began organizing themselves politically at the turn of the century, they were legally bound by the *palkollissääntö* ('servants' regulation'), a law which protected the interests of employers, in force from 1865 to 1922 (Mannila-Kaipainen, p.127).

146 For women's employment trends in Russia see Stites, *op.cit.*, pp.56-60, 161-63. For a detailed account of peasants and factory workers see Rose L. Glickman, *Russian Factory Women: Workplace and Society 1880-1914*, Berkeley, 1984.

147 For women's employment in Finland see Riitta Jallinoja 'Naisten palkkatyön yleistyminen' in Eskola et al., eds, *op.cit.*, pp.17-41.



Finally, it must not be forgotten that in Finland and Russia, as elsewhere at the turn of the century, prostitution was for many women the only source of income and of an illusory independence.<sup>148</sup>

Despite the changing world of employment created by the growth of industry, agriculture was still the central component of the economic structure of Finland and Russia at the turn of the century. The values associated with male and female divisions of labour were founded on the male-female relationship in the traditional, agrarian way of life. Whatever theories of an ancient historical egalitarianism may exist, there is nothing to suggest that any trace of even a 'separate but equal' attitude towards women's and men's duties can have existed by the nineteenth century. The traditional status of rural woman is neatly encapsulated in the peasant proverbs which will be familiar to scholars of Russian and Finnish women's history: 'курица не птица, да женщина не человек', and 'ei harakka ole lintu eikä piika ihminen'.<sup>149</sup>

### 1.2.2 Traditional Values: Finland

Many Finnish writers portray the life of the countryside. Women may earn a respect commensurate with their station for performing 'women's work', but they are clearly subordinate to men. Men are the heads of the household. They command the right to property and make the final decisions. In Lassila's novels, widows living alone take on male duties such as the market trading of livestock, but they bow to the position and judgement of any men who may be present. Widowers never take on traditional female duties of child-care or housework. They hire local women for these tasks while they look for another wife.<sup>150</sup>

Riitta Jallinoja has pointed out that with the advent of the practice of male land ownership amongst the rural population, woman's status as she joined the household came to be understood as that of 'family

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148 For an assessment of contemporary statistical reports on prostitution in Russia and Finland respectively see Richard Stites, 'Prostitute and Society in Pre-Revolutionary Russia' (*Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 31, 1983, pp.350-51); and Armas Nieminen, *Taistelu sukupuolimoraalista*, Turku, 1951, p.95.

149 The Russian proverb, quoted with translation in Glickman, *op.cit.*, p.29 is 'a hen is not a bird, a woman is not a person.' The Finnish proverb, quoted in Mannila-Kaipainen, *op.cit.*, p.122, from *Nykysuomen sanakirja* is 'a magpie is not a bird, a maid is not a person.'

150 As in Lassila's *Tulitikkuja lainaamassa* (1910, 'Borrowing matches') or *Kilpakosijat* (1912, 'Rival suitors').



helper'.<sup>151</sup> This is a status which offered women neither reward for their labour, nor any right over what they produced. It is this status which is made explicit in many of Jotuni's short stories. Jotuni frequently explores the value of woman's working contribution to the household. In *Vasten mieltä* (1913, 'Against the grain'), a wife's handicrafts are considered the property of the household. When her husband dies she decides to leave, but her position gives her no rights to the fruits of her labour:

All my linen was left behind with my mother-in law, an endowment to the household. Two shirts and a pair of shoes is all I got when I left, my wages for three years' work.<sup>152</sup>

In Finland, women were expected to bring handicraft skills into the marital home. These skills also constituted a substantial portion of women's remunerated labour among the urban working classes in the transition period to industrialization. Another author to emphasize the undervalued and unseen nature of this type of woman's work is Pakkala, who examines the consequent relationship of the individual to her labour. In *Elsa*, the heroine's widowed mother is grateful for the sewing work she is given. In his research on Pakkala's novel, Pertti Karkama has pointed out that 'Viio's widow's labour, in her own view, is not *purchased* from her, but work is *given* to her.'<sup>153</sup> She does not attach economic value to her skill as a tradeable commodity, but rather sees her sewing commissions as a foil to destitution, brought about by God's grace and human charity.

Jotuni describes the lack of remuneration for women's work as 'the way of the people since the times of Adam'.<sup>154</sup> In *Kansantapa* (1913, 'The way of the people'), women resort to furtive sales of farm produce in order to obtain the goods they need to perform the household tasks that are expected of them. A woman who sells butter without her husband's knowledge in order to buy sugar, coffee and thread mutters:

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151 Jallinoja, 'Naisten palkkatyön yleistyminen', p.21; 'avustavia perheenjäseniä'.

152 Jotuni, *Vasten mieltä*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.91; 'siinä jäivät taloa rikastuttamaan, anopille jäivät kaikki kutomani. Kaksi paitaa ja kengät sain kun talosta läksin, siinä kolmen vuoden palkka.'

153 Pertti Karkama, *Teuvo Pakkalan romaanit*, Oulu, 1975, p.143; 'Viion leskeltä ei hänen oman käsityksen mukaan *osteta* työvoimaa, työtä *annetaan* hänelle.' (Italics in original.)

154 Jotuni, *Kansantapa*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.109; 'kansan tapa aina Aatamista asti'.



"They expect needlework, but cloth can be made without thread, I suppose? And clothes are needed to cover oneself, as is the common practice. But never a penny from the house. Gather your pennies wherever you can."  
 "That's how it is, once you followed someone to the altar."<sup>155</sup>

Although a woman's skills or labour are not acknowledged for their economic value, she is expected to contribute them for economic reasons. An extra pair of working hands is a consideration in marital unions in the countryside which is forced by economic necessity. In Jotuni's story *Jussi Petterin naiminen* (1913, 'Jussi Petteri marries'), the title character is attracted by Leenakaisa's strength, although she is his senior in years. Other men try to discourage him from becoming involved with her, but he is conscious of her ability to work:

her hands could make light work of any task, she could turn her hand to whatever she put it to or whatever it fell upon. She was all right for a woman.<sup>156</sup>

In Jotuni's story *Rakkautta* (1907, 'Of love'), the implication of woman, and her work, as an addition to household chattels is underlined. The woman in question mentions in advance that she suffers from rheumatism in her legs, precisely so that the man cannot later complain that he was deceived. The relationship is defined in the woman's words:

for example when a woman (...) does not ask for an annual allowance in return for her position, then the work she provides for the home is like good will, freely granted, and the fact that wages do not come into it, well, *that* is what you could even call *love*,<sup>157</sup>

and in her suitor's reply that:

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155 *ibid.*, p.107; 'Kutoa saa, vaan langattako se kangas syntyy? Ja vaatteisiin pitäisi verhoutua, niinkuin ihmisten tapa on. Vaan ei penniäkään talosta. Kierrä penni vaikka mistä. - Sitä se on kun kerran ketä alttarille asti seurasit.'

156 Jotuni, *Jussi Petterin naiminen*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.186; 'kääntyivät ne työt senkin käsissä, teki mitä sattui ja joka kohtaan joutui. Oli se reilu naiseksi.'

157 Jotuni, *Rakkautta*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.1, p.155; 'esimerkiksi kun nainen (...) ei vaadi vuotuista palkkaa oloistaan, niin se työ, jonka nainen pesään tekee, on niin kuin vapaaehtoista hyvyttä, ja ettei palkoista tule puhetta - niin *sitä* voi sanoa vaikka *rakkaudeksi*.'



he also offers his money freely. He won't be keeping too close an eye on that side of things, and that can also be called love.<sup>158</sup>

### 1.2.3 Traditional Values: Russia

Russian writers' portrayals of peasant existence reveal a very similar, though often more brutal, relationship between man, woman and the land. With regard to the value of human life and labour, serfdom represents an important historical distinction between Finland and Russia. However, while this often affects the descriptive motifs of peasant women's portrayals in Russia literature, it is a distinction which makes little difference to the values associated with women's economic role. In Finland as in Russia, land meant both power and work, and it remained in male hands. In Russia, male land rights had the same effect as land ownership on the status of women within the household. As Rose Glickman explains:

the peasant woman had neither direct access to land, the most vital component of subsistence, nor a role in the conduct of domestic or communal life.<sup>159</sup>

Chekhov's story *V ovrage* (1900, *In the Hollow*, 1975) is one of the most vivid and intense explorations of this domestic structure. The story expresses the nature of economic roles within the patriarchal order as a crisis of human relationships. The brutality of the protagonist, Aksinia, stems from a conflict between her natural vitality and her frustrated attempt to take an active part in the economic life of her community. Beverly Hahn has pointed out that Chekhov often succeeds in portraying 'feminine defiance as frustration with lack of opportunity'.<sup>160</sup> She cites as an example the title heroine of the story *Agafia* (1886), who rebels against the conventions of marital fidelity. Hahn herself does not place Aksinia in this category of Chekhov's types, but agrees with other views of Aksinia as evidence of Chekhov's fear of some 'untamed,' 'conquering impulse' in the female psyche.<sup>161</sup> Aksinia's characterization

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158 *ibid.*, p.155; 'hän antaa myös vapaasti rahoja. Ei niihin hyvin tarkkoja rajoja pantaisi, ja sitäkin sopii sanoa rakkaudeksi.'

159 Glickman, *op.cit.*, p.29.

160 Beverly Hahn, *Chekhov: A Study of the Major Stories and Plays*, Cambridge, 1977, p.216.

161 *ibid.*, p.216. Other scholars to express this view are Sophie Lafitte (1963), Virginia Llewellyn Smith (1973), and most recently Carolina de Maegd-Soëp (1987).



nevertheless fits Hahn's point extremely accurately. Even more than Agafia, Aksinia is a complex interpretation of woman's dilemma with her responsibilities, because she succeeds in taking on masculine roles in work and economic life. She is described specifically as looking into the mouths of horses like a *muzhik*. She runs her husband's shop (she even keeps the keys), where she sells illicit vodka, and she establishes a brickworks on her father-in-law's land.<sup>162</sup> However, she possesses no determining control over any of her enterprises. Her father-in-law makes a will in which he makes his baby grandson (who is not Aksinia's child) beneficiary of his land, and Aksinia, furious, impetuously murders the boy. Carolina de Maegd-Soëp has expressed the view that Aksinia:

fills us not only with horror because of her unpunished crime, but even more so because she has the power to take gradual possession of people's property and, if necessary, of their lives.<sup>163</sup>

Aksinia's position may rather fill us with horror because she has no rights, no actual 'power' at all, of possession or otherwise. Her eventual dominance only underlines the fact that violence is her only recourse for imposing her will. Like the wife in Jotuni's *Vasten mieltä*, she realizes her home is not her own. She rages: 'I am not a daughter-in-law, just a hired hand.'<sup>164</sup> She uses the words 'my land' to express what it is she feels robbed of.<sup>165</sup> Her failure to win a place in the hierarchy, which would grant her identity and authority, turns her vital energy into a reckless force.

Woman's meek acceptance of her position brings no reward either. And the position of mother-in-law can be just as uncertain as that of daughter-in-law. In Bunin's story *Fedosevna* (1891), the title character is an old peasant woman who has outlived her 'usefulness'. She is forced to leave the home of her married daughter:

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<sup>162</sup> It is important to note that these are all socio-economic male duties, not 'masculine' characteristics.

<sup>163</sup> Carolina de Maegd-Soëp, *Chekhov and Women: Women in the Life and Work of Chekhov*, Columbus, 1987, p.284.

<sup>164</sup> Chekhov, *V ovrage*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.10, p.170, 'я не невеста а работница.'

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*, p.172; 'мою землю.'



It would not have hurt Parasha's husband to shelter an almost sightless, frail, tearful old woman, but he was not the sort to feed a superfluous mouth.<sup>166</sup>

Like the widow of Pakkala's novel, Fedosevna perceives her position as dependence on charity, rather than as a right to a place in the household she has worked to create and maintain. Returning from her wanderings, Fedosevna finishes as a beggar in her own home.

Women often contributed the greatest workload in a peasant household, particularly during the post-famine years in which Bunin's *Fedosevna* is set.<sup>167</sup> Nevertheless they received no recognition for their labour, and enjoyed no authority in the domestic household. This exclusion from the dynamics of the feudal hierarchy is ever implicit in the peasant theme of Bunin's work. Woman appears as an entity external to the interaction of man and his environment, of peasant and landlord. Witch-like, demented or ghostly, woman remains on a supra-natural plane, while the tensions of rural Russian *byt* is a male prerogative in Bunin's work. In his study of the declining provincial gentry, *Sukhodol* (1911, *Dry Valley*, 1935), the protagonists are largely female, but they simply mirror the decaying environment. The cause and effect of the decline of the old order, remains as male-oriented as the order itself. The narrator remarks: 'The masters and serfs had this characteristic in common: they could either rule or cower.'<sup>168</sup> It is male peasants who express the conflict arising from the disintegration of the feudal bond, the degeneration of the peasant work ethic and alienation from the soil.<sup>169</sup> Like the pines in Bunin's story of the same name, women reflect the vicissitudes of the patriarchal order, but they do not participate in it. For Bunin the matrix of Russian life encloses (male) peasant, master and land. At most, women's integration in the matrix takes place within the concept of family. Even here, however, she has no dynamic role. In *Veselyi dvor* (1912, 'The happy farmhouse'), Anisia

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166 Ivan Bunin, *Fedosevna*, in *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh*, Moscow, 1987, Vol.2, p.339; 'Парашкиному мужу было бы не грех приютить почти совсем слепую слабую слезливую старуху, но он был не такой человек, чтобы кормить лишний рот.' It is important to note the difference in the male and female dismissal of Fedosovna. Parasha's own rejection of her mother signifies the breakdown of traditional emotional bonds. Her husband's role reflects an economic reality.

167 See Glickman, *op.cit.*, pp.31-36, for peasant women's work in this period.

168 Bunin, *Sukhodol*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.3, p.139; 'У господ было в характере то же, что у холопов: или властвовать, или бояться.'

169 The stories *Kastriuk* (1895), *Meliton* (1901), and *Sosny* (1901, 'The pines') are examples of this.



is no more than a sounding board for the conflicts of her husband and her son with the transition to the modern world.

In Russia, land reforms and the abolition of serfdom contributed little change to the life of peasant women, who were deprived of any status by church, law and custom. Of the circumstances of pre-revolutionary peasant woman, Xenia Gasiorowska has written:

The poorest, most stupid man, despised and insulted by everyone in his native village, still could find a human being who would bow to his will, work for him, and show him the respect denied by everybody else: all he had to do was marry.<sup>170</sup>

In Chekhov's candid account of village life *Muzhiki* (1897, *Peasants*, 1965), the author depicts the extent of a peasant woman's powerlessness in her community. Chekhov makes this all the more poignant by placing words expressing a faith in freedom in the mouth of the character Maria, who is severely battered by her husband and is petrified of him. It is a brutal oppression she cannot hope to escape by law or in spirit. Emancipation has added nothing here to woman's quality of life, but thinking about serfdom, Maria asserts: 'No, better to be free.'<sup>171</sup>

#### 1.2.4 From Distaff to Spear

The notion that woman's labour and production possess little or no value is entrenched in traditional culture. Any work for which woman is remunerated financially therefore comes to be understood as a form of begging rather than as purchased labour. A major contributory factor to this is the male right to land. The economic meaning of the power of paternity defines not simply the limitations on woman's income, but also her exclusion from the economic power structure. She can have no equality here, even when she works, because labour alone does not confer identity. The literature of this period abounds with themes of paternity, illegitimacy and inheritance. It is not poverty which is the real issue behind these themes. It is the right to one's identity within the economic system. The power of identity in the male line is underlined in Talvio's story *Isä ja poika* (1912, 'Father and son'). In the final reconciliation of the illegitimate son with his landowner father, the old

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170 Xenia Gasiorowska, *Women in Soviet Fiction 1917-1964*, Madison, 1968, pp.30-31.

171 Chekhov, *Muzhiki*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.9, p.302; 'Нет, воля лучше.'



man pulls a signet ring from his finger and places it on his son's. When Chekhov's Aksinia in *V ovrage* impulsively murders her sister-in-law's baby boy, she is striking at the root of her lack of rights, power and identity in the economic structure: the authority of male heritage.<sup>172</sup>

### 1.2.5 The Modern Economy: Working Girls

If woman is not perceived as a genuine work force, and is denied access to the control of resources, she is given one significant role in the economic structure. She is fully acceptable as a form of property.

The invidiousness of women's role as male property in marriage is expressed in many writers' portrayals of the moneyed classes. Many of the bourgeois women who seek an education do so precisely in order to free themselves from their identity as drawing room ornamentation. Both Liuba in Gor'kii's *Foma Gordeev* and Fanny in Canth's *Kotoa pois*, while choosing different solutions for the application of their erudition, are aware of the economic limitations of their position. Both despise their parents' desire to make them into attractive sales in the marriage market. Liuba is disgusted by the notion that her emeralds or the silverware enhance her appeal. Fanny is ashamed of the plush red dress and gold jewellery she is made to put on for the benefit of male visitors. Both long for a less materialistic romantic relationship. The argument against women's position in the propertied classes focused on her apparently idle and purposeless existence.<sup>173</sup> Independence and equality would stem from meaningful participation in the productive life of the community.

As has been shown in the case of peasant women, equal participation in the division of labour in no way assured liberation from woman's identity as male property. Literary portraits of the agrarian community reflect a domestic and communal structure in which women were equated with household possessions. The common factor between the women of the bourgeois classes and peasant women is marriage. As in the case of the unemployed wives of the merchant classes, peasant women's economic existence was directly dependent on

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172 The presence of this thematic element is confirmed by the baby's mother's own reaction. After the death of her son, Lipa feels she has no place in the house, and that she is 'superfluous' ('лишняя'). Chekhov, *V ovrage*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.10, p.177.

173 It is not the purpose here to discuss whether women of wealth were genuinely idle. What is relevant is that they were perceived as such.



the male head of the household. Peasant existence relied on labour which was not primarily measured in monetary terms.<sup>174</sup> By the turn of the century many women had left the countryside to take on paid work in the cities. This meant that, whatever her status in marriage, woman's income was at least technically outside the control of her husband. The single woman was not dependent on another male head of the household for her daily bread. Entry into industry or domestic service appeared to offer some escape from the marital subjection of the countryside, but to what extent did women's presence in the remunerated labour market alter their status? Historical accounts show that the same fundamental attitudes about the value of woman's working contribution existed in industry and domestic service as in the rural community. As a justification for limiting access to work and levels of pay it was argued that women's work, relative to men's, was worth less both in terms of its performance and in terms of its social significance. At the same time such arguments did not prevent women from being allocated the heaviest, most difficult or most skilled work in low-paid jobs. Women also frequently bore at least equal responsibility for supporting the family. Thus both in terms of performance and social significance, women were not rewarded according to the value of their labour, but according to the fact that they were women.<sup>175</sup>

The expanding range of female types in literary characterizations reflects the dimensions of women's economic profile at the turn of the century: increasingly obvious, but faceless. Servants, factory workers, seamstresses, governesses, schoolteachers, deaconesses, peasant women, and prostitutes make regular appearances, but more often than not, as background figures. Certainly where such figures do appear as

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174 This is not to say that peasant women did not work for money. In Russia just as in Finland, handicrafts were an important source of women's income (see Glickman, *op.cit.*, pp.36-38). Interestingly, Russian writing does not reflect this element of peasant women's lives in the way that Finnish writing does. This can be seen as evidence of the greater cultural gap between the classes existing in Russia, which caused writers to ignore the details of these women's lives. As Gasirowska has pointed out on the subject of peasant women, 'like visitors at the bedside of an incurable patient, the writers - and the readers - sighed in sympathy, and chastened, tiptoed away.' (Gasirowska, *op.cit.*, p.32).

175 Glickman, *op.cit.*, pp.105-55, provides a detailed analysis of the theories governing women's work and wage policies in Russia during this period. Similar attitudes are to be found in Finland, e.g. see Heikki Renvall, *Tulonjaosta suurimmissa kaupungeissamme 1875-1899*, Helsinki, 1900, in which the author states that because men have families to support: 'the smallest wage a man can accept is therefore larger than the smallest wage a woman can cope with' (p.79; 'pienin palkka, mihin mies voi tyytyä on sentähden suurempi kuin pienin, millä nainen voi tulla toimeen').



leading protagonists, they rarely serve to explore women's economic role, though this fact in itself suggests the invisibility of woman's work. In Gor'kii's *26 i 1* (1899, *Twenty Six and One*, 190-), for example, the portrait of the young and spirited Tania who works as a gold embroiderer above a basement bakery, takes no issue with the subject of women's working lives. The story concentrates rather on the dehumanizing existence of men kneading dough in damp conditions. Tania's role is symbolic, as an image of purity and energy. She is a motif in the theme of the men's disillusionment, as she is seduced by an outsider and falls as their idol. Gor'kii's story unintentionally highlights a defining aspect of women's penetration of the industrial economy. Tania's sexuality is the key element of the story, and of her function in the community.

It is this motif which emerges most strongly in literary themes of women's place in the economic structure. The undervaluing of woman's labour directly compromised woman's sexual integrity. The majority of women who turned to prostitution had indeed initially worked in factories, as seamstresses or in domestic service.<sup>176</sup> Amongst the many romanticized portraits of prostitutes as saints, muses or forces of revolution, writers were also aware of the rational criteria which led women to trade their bodies. In Leino's novel *Jaana Rönty*, the author describes the many economic traps on the path towards prostitution for a young girl arriving in the city from the countryside. Jaana has her purse stolen by the woman who gives her a bed for the night. A neighbouring widow procures her for a brothel, from which she is saved by the grace of a wealthy client who takes pity on her innocence and pays for her permission to leave. She obtains a job in an industrial canteen, where she is duped by a plain clothes investigator of underground political organizations. While waiting for him on a street corner, she is wrongfully arrested as a street-walker, and is raped at the police station. In Jaana's encounters with the outside world, there is a constant interplay between her sexuality and money/power. Leino describes a socio-economic structure, the pressures of which push his naïve heroine ever closer to an assault on her body. Jaana's progress towards a socialist political consciousness is marked by economic exploitation in which her poverty is directly related to how she disposes of her sexuality, rather than of her labour.

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176 Stites, *Prostitute and Society*, p.364, and A. Nieminen, *op.cit.*, p.97.



In Russia, the image of the prostitute captured the imagination of almost all writers at some time. The 'independent woman' of Kuprin's *Reka zhizni*, is maintained in a hotel by a timber merchant, and invites gentlemen up from the street on her free days. She is the landlady's favourite tenant because she can pay her rent. The fact that women's bodies have a higher market value than their labour is most bluntly expressed in Gippius' story *Uverennaia* (1912, 'Convinced'), set in a brothel. A recent recruit, Zoren'ka, brushes aside all other speculations over women's route to prostitution with crushing cynicism: 'A person looks for what's best.'<sup>177</sup> In answer to the accusation that prostitution cannot be compared with honest labour such as shoemaking or metalwork, another prostitute, Viktiusa, states: 'You buy -- we sell. What's dishonest about that?'<sup>178</sup> Gippius' view of prostitution here is that it is fundamentally dependent on supply and demand. Viktiusa asks her clients:

Do you really think that if this work was offered to you and not to us, if we gave you money, that there would be no takers amongst you?<sup>179</sup>

### 1.2.6 Sexual Exploitation and the Patriarchal Order

The successful marketing of women's flesh, in marriage or prostitution, is a motif which relates to the physical abuse women endure at the hands of men. This is a major theme in the portrayal of women in this period. It is one which reveals the measure of the obstacle of paternalism in woman's equality. In the patriarchal hierarchy, women were not simply the property of the men of their class, but they became a significant commodity in inter-class relations.

In Russian literature, the physical abuse of women became a powerful analogy for the kind of economic exploitation which was harmful to the development of the nation. The emergent merchant and industrial classes appear as an army of parasites which cultivates the worst elements of human greed. This element of greed was felt to infect

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<sup>177</sup> Gippius, *Uverennaia*, in *Lunnye Murav'i*, Moscow, 1912, p.97; 'человек ищет где лучше.'

<sup>178</sup> *ibid.*, p.100; 'вы покупаете - мы продаем. Где же не-честное-то?'

<sup>179</sup> *ibid.*, p.100; 'Ты думаешь, коли бы вам, а не нам, эта работа была предоставлена, и мы бы вам денежки платили, - не нашлось бы у вас работников?'



all levels of society, from peasants to the aristocracy. It is used in vivid contrast with the deprivation experienced by the poor. In Bunin's *Derevnia* (1909-10, *The Village*, 1923), Kuz'ma is disgusted at the grasping 'revolutionary' Deniska's amusement over the fact that, during the years of famine, prostitutes would do 'the whole job' for a pound of bread, which they would eat during intercourse because they were so hungry.<sup>180</sup> This type of insensitivity reaches the level of sadism in Gor'kii's *Troe* (1901, *The Three*, 1958), where the fragile Masha is bought by a merchant for six roubles. After marrying her, that is, confirming her position as his property, he systematically assaults her. Masha's fate is used to highlight the position of the novel's main protagonist, Ilia Lunev, on his participation in the capitalist economy. In the passages before Masha appears on his doorstep, Ilia's thoughts dwell on his social standing as a shopkeeper. He struggles to persuade himself that he has achieved the decent existence he had hoped for: 'to live cleanly, quietly, and in such a way that people would respect him.'<sup>181</sup> Masha, his childhood friend, appears as a physical reminder of the nature of exploitation, as it exists behind the deceptive veil of respectability.

Masha's defencelessness is played upon in her child-like innocence; and her victimization conveys the impression of child molestation. Masha's characterization reveals an attitude of paternalistic benevolence in Gor'kii's approach to male-female relations. This patriarchal protectiveness is brought out more strongly in Gor'kii's account *Vyvod* (1895, 'The procession'). In the scene with Masha, Gor'kii condemns the materialism of the merchant class. *Vyvod* has a peasant setting. It relates an incident from his travels, during which he witnessed a woman savagely punished for adultery in some small corner of the provinces.<sup>182</sup> Gor'kii's own notes on the story emphasize the brutality of the treatment, but not its basic injustice. For Gor'kii the root of the problem is once again an unspecific universal human 'greed':

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180 Bunin, *Derevnia*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.31. The actual words are: 'Дашь ей полхунта хлеба за всю работу, а она соржет его под тобой' ('Give her a pound of bread for the whole job and she will devour it under you').

181 Gor'kii, *Troe*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.3, p.396; 'жить чисто, спокойно и чтобы люди уважали его.'

182 The tale describes a woman beaten and dragged along on foot, attached to a horse and cart.



And thus I saw that all this was possible among people who were ignorant, unscrupulous, dehumanized through a life of dependence and greed.<sup>183</sup>

The amelioration of peasant woman's existence lies in civilization. Clearly, the educated classes are conscious of the basic inhumanity in the physical abuse of defenceless women, even after their 'improper' conduct. Neither Gor'kii's notes, nor the 1904 review of the story (nor, for that matter, Borrás' 1967 biography of the author) comments on the incident from the point of view of woman's rights over her body. In view of the legal control husbands or fathers had over a woman's passport and, by extension, movements, this was nevertheless an important matter for women's liberation.<sup>184</sup> Gor'kii seems to suggest that the punishment was disproportionately harsh.

As an element of Gor'kii's portraits, violence reflects a view of society in which women's quality of life will improve not when men accept them as equals, but when men evolve from brutes into gallants. His play *Vragi* (1906, *Enemies*, 1946) contains a scene in which two women of the propertied classes are approached by drunken workers. The message behind the incident is that these honest working men are far more likely to behave honourably towards them than the men of their own class. Violence is seen to be in-bred in a society permeated by greed. The protection of women becomes a symbol for social enlightenment which is deeply rooted in the paternalistic attitudes of the intellectual classes.

The question of male harassment of women is not a feminist issue in Gor'kii's work. Gor'kii criticizes men for being blackguards when they should be princes, but does not extend the criticism to the structure which exposes women to the covetous attentions of blackguards and princes alike. Men's right to violence over women is questioned by women writers in Finland in relation both to their own socio-economic powerlessness, and to the political context of the nation. Amongst the period's most powerful stories is Aino Kallas' *Häät* (1905, 'The wedding'). The story is set in Estonia, where the relationship

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183 Gor'kii, *Vyvod*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.1, p.186; 'И вот - видел, что все это возможно в среде людей безграмотных, бессовестных, одичавших от волчьей жизни в зависти и жадности.'

184 By contrast, in *Troe* Gor'kii does refer to police intervention in returning runaway wives to their husbands. Here, the futility of Masha's attempts at escaping her husband is further underlined by the fact that he is a magistrate. Gor'kii, *Troe*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.3, p.400.



between peasant and landowner belonged to the same tradition of serfdom as in Russia. Peasant women were often at the disposal of the gentry. The peasant bride in the story is called up to the estate on her wedding night in accordance with first night tradition. Her willingness is expected not only by the landowners but also by her own community. Her own people assure her that resistance will lead to forced assault. The inevitability of her rape, be she docile or rebellious, is undisputed. But she will dispute it. She resolves to murder the man who demands her for his bed. The struggle for identity is political on the two levels of gender and class. In her decision to use a knife as her weapon, a parallel is made with the violence that is intended on her. Her struggle over the right to her body is a struggle of life and death as a woman. At the same time, the story is more than a study of institutionalized male violence. It belongs to the same socio-political context as Kallas' other stories set in Estonia, such as *Lukkari ja kirkkoherra* (1904, 'The sexton and the parson') or *Bernhard Rives* (1913). The narrator of the latter story realizes that:

in this peasant, this Bernhard Rives, seven hundred years of serfdom straightened its back.<sup>185</sup>

The same can be said of the bride in *Hääät*. Like Rives, she takes a necessary first step which will undermine the patriarchal structure. Even though she will be sent to Siberia, she will be the psychological victor, because she is motivated by justice, purity, and above all the will to resist actively. In its political stance the story resembles the national romantic theme of resistance expressed in so many allegorical poems of the same period, suggesting that though the body may be trapped, the spirit is free.

Woman's revenge as a catalyst in the degeneration of a socio-economic structure based on exploitation is also a dominant theme in Talvio's work. Her novel *Pimeän pirtin hävitys* portrays the enticement of innocent country girls by a dissolute gentry from the same standpoint as Tolstoi paints the seduction of Katiusha by Nekhliudov. Unlike Tolstoi however, Talvio sees no resurrection for the men of the gentry, but a gradual disintegration resulting from their own actions. Their

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<sup>185</sup> Aino Kallas, *Bernhard Rives*, in *Lähteiden laivojen kaupunki*, Helsinki, 1913, p.18; 'tässä talonpoikassa, tässä Bernhard Riveksessä, suoristui seitsensatavuotisen orjuuden selkä.'



victims will be the tools of their destruction. The novel's protagonist, Hanni, is socially a marginal figure. Symbolic of her marginalization is the fact that she does not fully belong to any class. She is the daughter in a family of tenant farmers, but her real father is the landowner on whose land they live. Hanni is also marginal because of her moral purity. The sexual whims of the upper classes are widely perceived as normal, or harmless enough in secret, so that Hanni's refusal to accept them sets her aside from all sectors of the community. Hanni's attempts to resist sexual exploitation are linked to her identity within the economic structure not merely in terms of relative wealth, but in terms of her independent right to her body. Like Tolstoi's Katiusha, Hanni will finish as a prostitute. The interpretation of the economic forces contributing to the respective downfalls of their heroines differs between the two authors however. In Katiusha's economic progress towards the brothel Tolstoi charts a tale of realistic, circumstantial misfortune. Katiusha merely fails to find other suitable work, because woman's working opportunities are narrow and she has no experience. Talvio suggests rather that woman's role as sexual property is an extremely damaging, institutionalized construct of the economic system. In the short term Hanni's downfall is brought about by rape, after which the reader encounters her, years later, as Jeanette in a brothel. In the long term, it is Hanni's inability to assert her own human value which leads her to adopt society's value of woman.

Talvio's tale presents a view of economic disintegration. In her role as a prostitute, Hanni 'steals' from the women and children of the moneyed classes. The spread of disease from brothels to family homes is the usual Marxist moral of the prostitute's revenge, but Talvio's view of the declining gentry includes a strongly national element.<sup>186</sup> Hanni is her seducer's own daughter, and when he realizes this he loses his mind. The devastation of his class is symbolized not only in this, but in the fact that in his violation of Hanni he violated his own people.

The nature and meaning of the violence which will later be inflicted on Hanni is implied at an early stage when the farm's

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186 The concluding passages of the earliest editions of the novel emphasized the national context of Talvio's theme. She refers specifically to 'the Finnish nation' ('Suomen maata') in her appeal to the educated classes to address the problem of prostitution. See Reeta Nieminen, 'Haapaniemen Ainosta Hilja Haapaseen: Tyyni Tuulion ja V.A. Koskenniemen näkemykset Maila Talvion varhaisista naiskuvista' in Kerttu Saarenheimo, ed., *Runoilijan monet kasvot: kirjoituksia V.A. Koskenniemestä*, Turku, 1985, p.91.



favourite, 'bright, white lamb' is killed by the landowner's hunting dogs.<sup>187</sup> Later, working as a maid on the estate, Hanni mentions the incident and the landowner dismisses it with an offer of money. Hanni answers 'money cannot buy one like that',<sup>188</sup> and she could as easily be talking about herself. Once she is destroyed as Hanni, like the lamb casually sacrificed for pleasure, she is not redeemable. Only as the urban prostitute, Jeanette, can she be purchased. It is only then that she successfully enters and acquires identity in the economy. Society at large conspires in her downfall, but the active agents are the law and money, controlled by men.

The phenomenon of male assault as an element of the socio-economic structure extends the theme of woman's difficult financial position which dominates Jotuni's work. In her story *Anita*, she paints a sympathetic portrait of an older man, the 'agronomist Göran', who is briefly tempted with 'possessing' his beautiful young niece. Jotuni demonstrates that his world of wealth and power has distorted his understanding of his 'rights', a word which recurs with marked frequency in the text. It is impossible to reconcile his view of society as a hierarchy with his desire not to exploit. Göran refutes the illusion that: 'All people are supposed to be equal?'<sup>189</sup> When he contemplates his niece sexually, he guiltily assures himself that 'he would do her no violence'.<sup>190</sup> Jotuni's point is that paternalism does not work. Göran's inability to perceive people as equals leads inevitably to unequal relationships, and where women are concerned, to inevitable sexual exploitation.

It is important to note that all these works appeared before the constitutional reform of 1906 in Finland which secured equal rights for women. In the work of Talvio, Kallas and Jotuni, the concept of woman's independence is closely interwoven with national responsibilities. The focus on basic human rights, on the right of control over one's body, creates a direct link to civil and constitutional rights. In these writers' later work, themes of moral hypocrisy and economic class conflicts become more composite studies of social injustices.

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187 Talvio, *Pimeän pirtin hävitys*, in *Kootut teokset*, Porvoo, 1953-56, Vol.2, p.157; 'heidän korean valkoisen karitsansa'.

188 *ibid.*, p.216; 'ei sellaista rahalla saa'.

189 Jotuni, *Anita*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.42; 'Yhdenarvoisia muka kaikki ihmiset?'

190 *ibid.*, p.46; 'hän ei tekisi väkivaltaa hänelle'.

### 1.2.7 Conclusion

The recognition of women's economic participation presupposes an economic value placed on their skills, services and very being. If woman was to find a place in the economic structure, then what was it she had to sell? Literary themes related to women's socio-economic status reveal that cultural perceptions of the value of woman's labour and person were not conducive to her liberation through economic self-sufficiency.

Woman is unable to join the social hierarchy because she fails to acquire subjective, independent identity either in marriage or in employment. She remains property, the defining quality of which is her sexuality. The right to woman's body is a basic principle in the power structure. In the modern economy, money replaces custom as the determining element of a structure which allows men access to women's bodies according to rank and status. Like most property, women exist to be owned, bartered, stolen or destroyed. Woman's own economic choices become a question of how best to dispense with her sexual value.

The force of patriarchal ideology is reflected in writers' approach to women's role within the socio-economic structure. In both Russia and Finland, women's exploitation in prostitution and rape become an allegory for national ills. Violence is imposed from within in Russia, in countless descriptions of the brutality of male-female relationships within the peasantry, the merchant classes or the aristocracy. For Finland, the enemy is without. Female victims are cut off from their oppressors by class, age, language or culture. In both cases, an analogy is drawn between the relationship of woman to man and that of citizen to state.



## CHAPTER TWO

### 2 ACTION (II): Political Madonnas

By the end of the nineteenth century, a social and political structure which sanctioned male control of the ignorance, enslavement and abuse of women represented an unacceptable contradiction to the values of civilized society. In their examination of the issues raised by feminist thought, writers concentrated on woman's place in society as it existed relative to man's. The debate over women's educational and career opportunities, over the impact of society and environment in defining woman's role, was essentially projected as a matter of how men treated women. Writers speculated about the consequences of male behaviour for women's personal development as well as for the future of humanity as a whole. They attempted to identify the areas of shortcoming and necessary change in the patriarchal hierarchy. This approach cast women as passive elements in human interaction, and, analogously, as the passive subjects of state authority.

While fundamental changes in woman's position were called for on the basis of her equal status as a human being, the character and dimension of these changes became determined by the concept of her separate quality of womanhood. This duality was the legacy of the Enlightenment on the status and nature of women.<sup>191</sup> The concept of equality in Enlightenment thought combined the rejection of inherited authority with the acceptance of the existing separate spheres of the sexes as some form of empirical evidence. The refutation of woman as the inferior sex cultivated by extension a concept of woman's superior qualities. As Elisabeth Fox-Genovese has put it, 'women were declared not to be evil, but especially excellent.'<sup>192</sup>

It was this essential excellence which was to be fostered in order to turn woman into an active, useful member of the social order.

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191 For an overview of the influence of Enlightenment thought on women's position see Fox-Genovese, *op.cit.*, pp.251-77.

192 *ibid.*, p.263.

Alongside studies of women's lives under male dominance, a picture of woman as the agent of action, as a dynamic social force on her own account was widely explored in literature. Political conditions in Finland and Russia contributed to literary appraisals of woman's capacity to take action within a context of national and universal significance. The mystification of the feminine being was used to create images of women whose characters and actions had political implications. They were thus not simply portrayed as citizens to whom the state has a responsibility, but also as builders of the future nation.

## 2.1 Past Queens

One of the most unambiguous ways in which writers examined woman's capacity for national action according to the dictates of her nature was by turning to past images of powerful women. Familiar biblical or classical figures inspired authors to rewrite particular stories in order to explore the causes and consequences of women's motivations in power struggles. These themes were often allegorical. Their female protagonists cannot therefore be considered as realist types, but they do offer an interpretation of a specifically feminine role within the context of national ambitions. They focused on elements of a supposedly female impulse, which also came to characterize portraits of politically conscious women in realist prose. Such imagery helped to define women's own loyalties, as well as their expectations of loyalty. For this reason it is worth assessing this imagery before examining the more straightforward contemporary models of woman as a citizen whose actions and responsibilities are directed towards national progress and freedom.

In Finland, the figure of Bathsheba, for whom King David has her husband Uriah killed by placing him in the front ranks of his army, inspired both Volter Kilpi and Aino Kallas to write their own versions of the tale. Kilpi's version, *Bathsheba* (1900), is set in its original time and place, although it manipulates the story to omit Bathsheba's part as queen mother. In Kilpi's tale Bathsheba kills herself soon after Uriah's death in order to take responsibility for it. Her love for David does not prevent her seeing the error of his act of murder. She perceives a greater morality than David, who places his faith in the moral right bestowed by the superhuman act. Kilpi concentrates on the psychology of David and



on David's feelings for Bathsheba. His story is more a study of individual will than national loyalties, but it does develop the idea of woman's instinct for right and wrong in the struggle for power. Bathsheba's personal sacrifice adjusts the balance of power, re-establishing universal order where one man, a king, was driven by destructive self-interest. Bathsheba is 'the glorified spirit of sacrifice', before whom David recognizes that he is not a god.<sup>193</sup>

Kallas's tale, *Bathsheba Saarenmaalla* (1904, *Bath-Sheba of Saaremaa*, 1934) is less immersed in the Nietzschean superman philosophy which was so central to the neo-romantic movement. Kallas' Bathsheba is of an Estonian peasant family. She confesses to her husband that she knows of the landlord's decision to send him to the battle front. The portrait is a study of divided loyalties. It highlights the woman's involvement and responsibility in a situation over which she has no control, but which her very existence has provoked. The heroine's tragedy is also a warning against the dangers of collusion with an inevitable enemy. The king-commoner theme, individualistic in Kilpi, has a class implication in Kallas's story. The Estonian setting, the peasant-landlord context, and the focus on Bathsheba's relationship with her betrayed husband rather than with the landlord, David's counterpart, indicate the political allegory in the tale.

Both interpretations of Bathsheba's role in the affairs of men imply the abuse of power in exploiting a loyal subject. This element of the tales relates to the theme of woman's abduction as a manifestation of power, raised in the previous chapter. The loyal subject is Uriah, not Bathsheba, exploited by having that which he loves most dearly taken from him. The analogy is not without significance as the imperial government increased its measures for the russification of Finnish institutions between 1899 and 1904.<sup>194</sup> In Russia, similar allegorical criticism was directed at internal conditions of party political impotence and government coercion. Intellectuals were aware of the inefficacy of legal attempts to implement the government's promises of

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193 Volter Kilpi, *Bathsheba*, Helsinki, 1900, p.195; 'uhrautumisen kirkastettu henki'.

194 This period, beginning with the February manifesto of 1899 limiting Finland's legislative autonomy, is known as the 'first period of oppression'. The manifesto was followed by decrees for gradually introducing Russian as the language of government and administration, and ordering conscripted Finns to serve in any part of the Empire. These measures represented the policy of Nikolai Bobrikov, appointed Governor General of Finland in 1898, assassinated by a Finn in 1904. See Kirby, *op.cit.*, pp.25-30.



constitutional reform in 1905.<sup>195</sup> Andreev expressed precisely this awareness in his satirical play *Prekrasnye Sabiniaki* (1911, *The Sabine Women*, 1915). He reproduces the theme of the rape of the Sabine women as a study of power in which only aggression inspires confidence. In Andreev's play, the Sabine women prefer their Roman abductors over their husbands because of the Sabine men's failure to exercise sufficient power. The women conspire with the Romans just as the constitutional promises of 1905 ultimately remained blocked by the administration. Both are inevitably treacherous because they have been inadequately protected by their rightful guardians.

More significant in the understanding of woman as a wilful agent in power conflicts is Andreev's interpretation of the figure of Delilah. The theme lies behind his characterization of the protagonists in *T'ma* (1907, 'Darkness'), and inspired his version of the legend in the play *Samson v okovakh* (1915, *Samson in Chains*, 1923). The story also appealed to Johannes Linnankoski in Finland, who wrote a play of the legend, *Simson ja Delila* (1911, 'Samson and Delilah'). The theme offered the possibility of examining the extreme poles of woman's sense of loyalty in the contrast between betrayal and sacrifice, between personal interest and national justice. Andreev's and Linnankoski's plays both demonstrate that woman's actions, motivated by self-interest and jealousy, have potentially dangerous and far-reaching consequences. Woman, bound by her sexuality, has no place in affairs of state. In war, she breaks the rules of the game by tricking men into death with her body. Delilah's treacherous identity is that of a prostitute. This idea is woven into Linnankoski's characterization:

what is it exactly that lies like a snake in the path of Israel's men?(...) It is a woman, with her thousand charms.<sup>196</sup>

More explicitly, Samson is told: 'you, the hero, lie between the knees of a whore.'<sup>197</sup> Andreev makes the same association in *T'ma*, by comparing

195 The autocracy was forced to issue a manifesto promising extended civil rights and reforms in order to restore stability after the unrest of the 1905 revolution. The Constitutional Democratic party attempted to preserve these guarantees through strictly legal channels, although the period witnessed strict government reaction, which resulted in the administration's constant attempt to suppress the constitutional concessions it made. See Westwood, *op.cit.*, pp.158-67.

196 Johannes Linnankoski, *Simson ja Delila*, in *Kootut teokset*, Porvoo, 1952, pp.486-87; 'mikä se oikein on, joka makaa käärmeeä Israelin miesten polulla?(...) Se on nainen ja hänen tuhannet houkutuksensa.'

197 Linnankoski, *ibid.*, p.460; 'sinä, sankari, makaat porton polvilla.'



its protagonists, a revolutionary terrorist and a prostitute, to Samson and Delilah. Both authors rehabilitate their heroines through personal sacrifice. In the versions of the legend, this occurs through Delilah's decision to free Samson, in Andreev's *T'ma*, through the hero's recognition of Liuba's prostitution as self-sacrifice rather than self-indulgence.

Although Delilah's eventual martyrdom is an example of great sacrifice, the thematic element of woman's private interests conflicting with national issues reduces the impact of her motivations in correcting her action. Substantially more magnificent portraits of feminine sacrifice are found in Kuprin's version of the Song of Songs, *Sulamif'* (1908, *Sulamith. A Romance of Antiquity*, 1928) and Linnankoski's portrait of the title heroine in *Jeftan tytär* (1911, 'Jephtah's Daughter'). In Kuprin's story, the former queen, Artis, plans to have Solomon murdered out of jealousy. Like Delilah's betrayal of Samson, Artis' intention affects not only their personal drama but also threatens the stability of the nation. However, woman's love can also be channelled for the greater good. Solomon's beloved Shulamite defends the king with her body against the knife wielded by Artis' lover and accomplice. The Shulamite's death is shown to be an act of salvation for Israel. The romantic theme is purposefully interwoven with detailed descriptions of Solomon's fairness, wisdom and power. The purity of her death is emphasized by contrasting the Shulamite's virginity with Artis' sensual obsessiveness. The Shulamite has only been queen for seven days and refers to herself as Solomon's 'dark maiden'.<sup>198</sup> Likewise, in *Jeftan tytär*, Linnankoski gives expression to his vision of the most pure, absolute act of national loyalty as the young daughter willingly gives her virginal life for the sake of Israel.

These recreated portraits of legendary figures reveal certain features of a rationalization of woman's role in the social structure, which captured writers' imagination. Romantic love is the starting point for a psychology of national female loyalty. Woman's influence on the course of history is inextricably bound by her sexual loyalties, be it in her possession, treachery or sacrifice. The same pattern is imposed on other portraits of women from this period which do not use legend as an allegory, but which are set in a contemporary national thematic context.

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198 Kuprin, *Sulamif'*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.312; 'смуглая девушка'. They also talk of their first meeting, reinforcing the impression of her virginity, just before she dies.



In many stories, as has been seen in the previous chapter, sexual possession is a motif of the class struggle. In Leino's *Jaana Rönty*, the heroine's rape is used as propaganda by both the right and the left wing.<sup>199</sup> After the failure of the 1905 strike, she realizes that she is no longer sexually desirable. Kuprin's story *Morskaia bolezn'* (1908, 'Sea sickness') describes the multiple rape of the wife of a Social Democrat by sailors on board a ship. The story was severely criticized by Gor'kii for its unsympathetic portrayal of the woman's husband, whose reaction to the incident is selfish and filled with reproach. Gor'kii objected to the 'coarse naturalism' of the scene, particularly since it only served to cast Social Democrats in such negative light.<sup>200</sup> Gor'kii's reaction, no less than Kuprin's story itself, indicates the potential of the theme of woman's sexual possession within political polemic.

Woman's treachery also has its impact on the social order. In Kuprin's story *Shtabs Kapitan Rybnikov* (1906, *Captain Rybnikov*, 1916), a prostitute causes the downfall of a Japanese spy. Clotilde, wanting to impress her lover Leonka with her knowledge of Rybnikov's true identity, is shown to be petty and selfish in her motivations. The story mostly concentrates on the relationship between Rybnikov and his arch rival, Shchavinskii, with whom he has fought a long-standing, mental duel. Although Rybnikov is technically the enemy, his capture appears a dishonourable victory. He is discovered in a brothel by a woman and not, as he should have been, exposed by Shchavinskii's military tactics. The implication is that he was taken unarmed, and not on the field of battle. A woman's treacherous actions similarly disrupt the status quo in Juhani Aho's *Juha*. The plot focuses on a love triangle in which all parties ultimately are the losers. The characters are less explicitly national enemies, but their forcefully evoked, ethnic identities contain a subliminal context of national loyalties. The husband, Juha is quintessentially Finnish, cast in the romantic mould of the honest and faithful man of the soil. He is betrayed by his gypsy wife, who absconds with the attractive but wanton 'bandit' from across the border into Karelia.

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199 Leino, *Jaana Rönty*, *inop.cit.*, Vol.9; she is told that Finland's 'gentlemen' (*herrat*) would surely have defended her just as they defended the people's rights against Russian oppression (p.331), and she is publicly hailed as a martyr because of the rape at a socialist meeting (p.408).

200 Referred to in the commentary on the story in Kuprin, *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.765.



Above all, however, it is the heroism of virginal self-sacrifice which typifies many portraits of politically active women. An example of this type is Musia in Andreev's *Rasskaz o semi poveshennykh* (1908, *The Seven Who Were Hanged*, 1941), which deals with the execution of revolutionaries in Russia, or Mertsii in Linnankoski's *Kirot* (1908, 'Curses'), which is an allegory of the generation conflict over passive and active resistance in Finland.

The appearance of women in the struggle for power tends thus to focus on their sexuality against a background of implicit national or universal issues. Often part of symbolist, existentialist studies, they examine the role of individual action in relation to a greater design, creating a concept of a feminine national spirit. The appeal of figures like the Shulamite or Jephthah's daughter lies partly in their personal anonymity, their almost total identification with the state (and fate) of Israel. Portraits of this kind do not, however, represent a literal ideal of female national responsibility, of which they inevitably fall short in certain respects. Themes of assault or betrayal fulfil a didactic function, expressing the need for protection and defence, but they do not suggest a programme for correct action. The self-sacrifice of young women is a more successfully emotive display of extreme loyalty, but it represents a temporary victory in its implication of abortiveness: there is no future in premature death. It may be a necessity for the battle field in question, but it lacks the potential for constructive progress. In Finland and Russia, facing as it seemed at the turn of the century a more momentous destiny, a commensurately more portentous imagery was required, one which was worthy of the divine character of the motherland itself. Such imagery was to be found in the figure of the Madonna.

## 2.2 Aspects of the Madonna

The Madonna's virginity denies sterility. It is a direct announcement of the future. The charismatic appeal of the myth of Mary stems from her duality as the purest and holiest of women, whilst simultaneously being the mother of God. This not only places her closer to God, but also resolves woman's problematic sexuality by presenting in ideal form her transition from Virgin to Mother. In both Lutheran and Orthodox Christianity, the rejection of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (but not the Virgin Birth), establishes the Madonna's unique bond with



humanity.<sup>201</sup> Inheriting original sin by virtue of her own birth, she belongs to the human race, but God singled her out from her sex and granted her sanctification. The key to earthly Mary's achievement of God's grace is her humility, and it is this feature which has been fostered as an ideal of womanhood. Indeed it is even this humble magnificence, a trace of the Madonna, which lurks beneath writers' recreations of legendary heroines. Both Kilpi's Bathsheba and Kuprin's Shulamite are 'queen over all women', yet also the meekest servant of masculine (king's and God's) will.<sup>202</sup> The Madonna's humility expresses strength in submissiveness. This quality is at the root of the loyalty and self-sacrifice which have come to exemplify woman's role as bride and mother. It is these facets of an idealization of womanhood which contributed the greatest inspiration to the literary interpretation of a feminine national identity at the turn of the century in Russia and Finland.

While both the virginal and the maternal aspects of the Madonna are relevant and interwoven, there is a difference in emphasis in Finland and Russia. In their evocation of national womanhood, Russian writers idolize the mother, while Finnish writers extol the bride. This is in part explained by the different impact of the myth of Mary in the respective cultures, particularly in the way that it inspired authors at the turn of the century. Both Orthodoxy and Lutheranism underline Mary's relationship to humanity, and both maintain that she can be venerated only as the god bearer. They differ, on the other hand, in their attitudes to the Assumption. Luther abolished the feast of the Assumption, while the Orthodox church accepts the miracle as evidence of the possibility of resurrection.<sup>203</sup> In the cult of the Madonna as intercessor, it was her motherhood which was the strongest element in earliest Byzantine Christianity.<sup>204</sup> The iconic imagery of the Madonna as the eternal Mother of God in Heaven is therefore more powerfully

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201 Warner, *op.cit.*, p.252.

202 V. Kilpi, *op.cit.*, e.g. David states that 'Bathsheba is queen among women' (p.29; 'Bathsheba on naisten kuningatar'). Bathsheba desires only to obey both David's and God's command, praying to the king for him send her away: 'I cannot leave if you forbid it' (p.79; 'minä en voi lähteä, jos sinä minua kiellät'). Kuprin, *Sulamif'*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, e.g. Solomon states that 'you (Shulamite) were born a genuine queen' (p.296; 'ты (Сулами́фь) родилась настоящей царицей'), comparing her to all the women he has known. The Shulamite wants 'only to be your slave, Solomon' (p.290; 'быть только твоею рабою, Соломон').

203 Warner, *op.cit.*, pp.96, 252.

204 *ibid.*, p.286.



embedded in Russian tradition. In Finland, imagery concentrates on her conception and pregnancy during her earthly life. The cult of Mary dating from Catholic times was greatly influenced by Franciscan monks.<sup>205</sup> Franciscan worship focused on Mary's mortal life, on her youthful loveliness and humility as a recent mother.<sup>206</sup> In Finnish oral tradition, likewise, she is most often an ordinary peasant girl and the birth of Christ in the manger is the climax of Mary's tale. This is true even in the more eastern regions of Finnish, Karelian and Ingrian folk poetry, where the theme of 'The Birth of the Creator' entered oral tradition through contact with Orthodox culture.<sup>207</sup>

Another important factor in the angle of emphasis is that in Russia, Mary's virginal identity came to be represented in Sophiology. Sophia embodied the 'religious-maidenly beauty of female characters that is reflected in medieval Madonnas', as a central motif of Symbolist art.<sup>208</sup> This symbolic function related to the country's aesthetic, rather than political, spiritual direction. It is in this thematic context that the image of the Virgin bride, epitomized in Sophia, surfaces in Russian literature.<sup>209</sup>

The Madonna of turn-of-the-century literature is undoubtedly moulded to the respective religious and cultural traditions. Her imagery also reflects the national and spiritual concerns that dominated intellectual life in the decades leading up to the First World War. While the mother image creates a concept of the nation and its soil in terms of its ancient, eternal purpose, the force of renewal and future is contained in the image of woman as a bride. The familiar 'Mother Russia' (*Русь матушка*) is an earth mother whose presence is timeless, and whose purpose is to bring forth a new saviour to restore her people to the righteous path. The equivalent 'Bride of Finland' (*Suomen morsian*) is

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205 V. Tarkiainen, 'Neitsyt Maria-aihe Eino Leinon tuotannossa' (*Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja*, 22, 1942, p.131).

206 Warner, *op.cit.*, pp.182-83.

207 See e.g. variants of the tale in Kuusi et al., eds, *op.cit.*, pp.283-308.

208 D.S. Merezhkovskii, *O prichinakh upadka i o novykh techeniakh sovremennoi russkoi literatury*, St Petersburg, 1893, p.42; 'символ религиозно-девственной красоты женских характеров, которая впоследствии отразилась в средне-вековых Мадоннах'. Even Merezhkovskii refers to 'the maternal compassion that inspires the love of a man and woman' (p.42; 'материнской жалости, которая одухотворяет любовь мужчины и женщины'). Translation from Ronald E. Peterson, ed. and trans., *The Russian Symbolists: An Anthology of Critical and Theoretical Writings*, Ann Arbor, 1986.

209 This aspect will be explored in Chapter Five.



young, fresh, and awaiting the self-fulfilment which will result from the rightful union of the land with her people.

This is not to say that mothers and marriageable women appear with mutually exclusive frequency in each nation's literature, and notably in portraits with a national message. There are many stories of specifically maternal sacrifice or intercession in the face of war in Finland, just as the many eligible woman revolutionaries of Russian literature clearly possess sexual promise. It is rather that the full charge of the political vision, with its spiritual and revolutionary dimension is carried in the feminine ideal that is suggested by the most popular invocations of *Русь* alongside *родина* (land of birth) and *Suomen morsian* alongside *isänmaa* (fatherland).

The mother-bride dichotomy penetrates much idealized, female imagery. The relative dominance of the different sides of the Madonna can be traced even in Sologub's and Pakkala's use of fantasy. In Sologub's work, the confused border between the real and the ideal world is expressed in terms of the changing face of a good and bad fairy-mother, in response to the protagonist's search for consolation. Pakkala's Elsa by contrast dreams of herself as a bride princess alternating with the figure of an angel, who together symbolize her ideals of purity and sexual potential. Often used to question religious morality, this choice of imagery reveals a link to religious tradition.

Realists and symbolists alike made associations of this kind within philosophical-political themes, exploring women's particular biological quality as a force to be harnessed for the future good. For Tolstoi, the reality of motherhood was the redemptive alternative to celibacy, itself the ultimate ideal in the fulfilment of God's design. It correctly channelled human sexual urges in order that the following generation might struggle anew to achieve the necessary restraint which would mark perfect unity with God. For Andrei Belyi, Russia itself was 'our earth fenced in, our mother'.<sup>210</sup> This earth mother is embodied in the figure of Matrëna in his *Serebrianyi golub'* (1909, *The Silver Dove*, 1974). Matrëna's characterization is rich in obvious Madonna motifs. She is the new church, she appears 'icon-like', and most importantly she is to be the source of the new redeemer. Matrëna is no innocent maiden,

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210 Andrei Belyi, *Serebrianyi golub'*, in *Izbrannaia proza*, Moscow, 1988, p.54; 'землицу-то нашу обставили, матушку.' Translation of this and all subsequent quotations from the novel are from *The Silver Dove*, trans. George Reavy, New York, 1974.



but an earthy, sensual, fully-fledged woman. This quality also characterizes many of the peasant women in Bunin's work whose relationship to the soil implies the soul of Russia. For Gor'kii too, the *baba* represents motherhood in harmony with the land and its purpose. Another aspect of motherhood which appealed to writers was the idea of courageous, long-suffering, maternal love. This is found in a number of portraits of women touched by the consequences of the revolutionary movement, such as in the character of Tania in Andreev's *Rasskaz o semi poveshennykh* or the mother in *Iz rasskaza, kotoryi nikogda ne budet okonchen* (1908, *A Story Which Will Never Be Finished*, 1916).

The concept of the eternal mother in Russia was a mystification of one aspect of woman's being. A similar process took place in Finland with the image of the bride. Even Järnefelt's short story *Maria*, which retells the biblical legend, is limited to the myth of conception. The theme of the Virgin Birth was taken up by Järnefelt and other writers as a topic of protest against the doctrine of the Lutheran church, which was held to be hypocritical in its simultaneous advocacy of marriage and virginity. Kianto's *Punainen viiva* (1909, 'The Red Mark') focuses on the political awakening of ageing peasants in the remote countryside. Here, in the absence of a bride-like protagonist, Kianto uses an explicit metaphor of 'Finland bride' (*Suomi morsian*) about to give birth. As yet she is only experiencing labour pains, while the interested doctors eagerly await the moment and manner of the inevitable outcome.<sup>211</sup>

The bride can be found in the works of many nationally tendentious prosaists. The title heroines of Järnefelt's *Helena* (1902), Talvio's *Aili* (1897) and Kallas' *Kirsti* (1902) all combine a socio-political consciousness with a new spirituality that develops their self-image as brides (and young mothers) to be. Helena's reconciliation with her fiancé after their respective wanderings and searches re-establishes harmony. Their young family suggests an immediately realizable model for an ideal society. For Aili:

to be betrothed to Pekka - means being betrothed to Kaarila, to the wilderness, to isolation, to be betrothed to work, to worry, to the people with their sorrows and their joys.<sup>212</sup>

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211 Ilmari Kianto, *Punainen viiva*, in *Valitut teokset*, Helsinki, 1923, Vol.1, p.108.

212 Talvio, *Aili*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.1, p.391; 'kihlautua Pekkaan - se on kihlautua Kaarilaan, sydänmaahan, yksinäisyyteen, kihlautua työhön, huoleen, kansaan suruineen ja iloineen.'



Kirsti's character development transforms her from an imperfect bride, as she sees herself, to an ideal wife and mother. This role removes her sense of displacement and provides her life with both private and social meaning.

### 2.3 Mothers, Brides and Politics

The most striking depictions of politically motivated women created a forcefully symbolic link between the concept of Land (Earth and Nation) and Woman (Virgin and Mother). Alongside myth, one important source of inspiration for the creation of this type was the new generation of women whose political involvement was more public and active than ever before. The growing presence of woman in public life stemmed from the gradual change in her status. Just as Finnish cultural nationalism and Russian radical thought engendered the roots of feminism, so women's political awakening drew women into the movements from which feminist ideology had emerged. Measures to improve standards of education, employment and morality for the benefit of women clearly required women's participation. By the 1880s, progressive ideology found a new outlet in organized activity. Women played an active role, as members of temperance societies, women's societies and philanthropic organizations. Institutions which would have allowed feminism to voice its demands for equal rights, such as political parties, active legislatures or free newspapers did not exist however. In both Finland and Russia, women continued to feel that they shared with men their lack of rights.

The reciprocal relationship between women's sense of their rights and duties within feminist ideology and the development of their political consciousness was quickly defined by class interests. The growth of party political organization in the 1890s and 1900s encouraged the awareness of national issues. In 1892, Finland's Union of Women's Societies was established as a more militant counterpart to the Finnish Women's Association.<sup>213</sup> This period also saw the emergence of a Swedish Women's Society in Finland, reflecting Swedish-speaking Finnish women's concern for their own linguistic and cultural group within the nationalist debate.<sup>214</sup> In 1897, the Russian government

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213 Evans, *op.cit.*, p.89.

214 *ibid.*, p.89.



rejected a bill passed in the Finnish Diet allowing women eligibility in communal elections, thus causing feminism to align itself yet more closely with the national cause.<sup>215</sup> Meanwhile, working class women, dissatisfied with the maternalistic attitude of the liberal middle classes, turned to socialism, and by 1905 the female membership of the Social Democratic Party had reached over 20 per cent.<sup>216</sup> In Russia the recruitment of women into the radical movement had been a well-established phenomenon since the 1860s as women became frustrated with the limitations of legal reforms, particularly since any government concessions were soon curbed during the waves of repression. By the mid-1890s, the reopening of women's educational courses in Russia was provoked by imperial consternation over the possible disloyalty of women studying abroad and therefore prone to Western influence.<sup>217</sup> Many women became disillusioned with the narrow scope of the Russian Women's Mutual Benefit Society, founded in 1895, which was closely monitored by the government in order to restrict its activities to philanthropy.<sup>218</sup> The absence of direct government interest in granting women civil rights forced women to join the revolutionary struggle. The uncompromisingly masculinist structure seemed otherwise unassailable.

The presence of women in the political forum was not ignored by writers. Characterizations of active women were modelled on the real circumstances of women's participation in the revolutionary movement in Russia or in political resistance in Finland. A substantial gallery of revolutionary types are to be found among the works of Tolstoi, Andreev, Kuprin, Gippius and Gor'kii. In Finland, women's role in the Russian radical movement inspired Jotuni's characterization of Vera in *Veripäivänä* (1913, 'Bloody Day') as well as L. Onerva's sketch of the title heroine of *Manja Pavlovna* (1909). Many of the active women in the works of Aho, Kianto, Järnefelt and Talvio reflect Finnish women's involvement with matters of national concern.

While the social types set in these contexts may represent historical realities, it was the metaphorical dimension of their womanhood which gave their characterization its impact. Reality was combined with a mystification of woman, in which an eternal, feminine

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215 *ibid.*, p.88.

216 Sulkunen, *op.cit.*, pp.124-25.

217 Evans, *op.cit.*, p.118.

218 *ibid.*, p.123.



quality was interwoven with an expression of future goals. The Madonna image was superimposed on realist portraits of contemporary, nationally conscious women. The most explicit examples of this phenomenon are to be found in the interpretations of woman's political awakening in the work of two authors in particular: Maxim Gor'kii in Russia, and Ilmari Kianto in Finland.

Biographical literary studies of Gor'kii and Kianto indicate that both authors drew much of their subject matter directly from their own experience. Many of their female types were based on women they had known personally. For Gor'kii, the beloved grandmother he describes in his autobiographical account *Detstvo* (1913-14, *Childhood*, 1954) provided the model for many of his sketches of ideal motherhood throughout his work. The most important of these is the portrait of Pelageia Nilovna in his novel of revolutionary action, *Mat'* (1906-08, *Mother*, 1954). While Nilovna's personality owes its development to Gor'kii's grandmother, as a social type the character is based on the real-life figure of Anna Zalomova, whose son bore the workers' banner at the 1902 May Day demonstration in Sormovo.<sup>219</sup> The parade resulted in the arrest and trial of the marchers and inspired the central incident of the novel's plot. Gor'kii wrote of Zalomova:

She is no exception.(...) I could name a dozen more mothers who were tried side by side with their children, many of whom I have met in person.<sup>220</sup>

Similarly, Kianto's novels contain many female protagonists whose non-fictional counterparts are described in his diaries dating from the period he lived in Moscow, *Moskovan maisteri* (1946, 'The Moscow student').<sup>221</sup> Unlike Gor'kii, however, Kianto was not inspired by an image of mature motherhood. For Kianto it is the image of a young woman, with the potential to become wife and mother, which suggested to him a force of renewal. The picture of the ideal bride is most comprehensively developed in his portrayal of Paula Winterberg in the novel *Pyhä viha* (1908, 'Sacred Anger'). The novel is set around the time of the 1905 General Strike which gripped Finland as the

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219 F.M. Borrás, *Maxim Gorky the Writer: an Interpretation*, Oxford, 1967, p.111.

220 Referred to in Gor'kii, *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.419; 'Она - не исключение.(...) Я мог бы назвать с десяток имен матерей, судившихся вместе с детьми и частью лично мне известных.'

221 The original diaries date from 1901 to 1903.



revolutionary atmosphere spread from Russia. The characterization of Paula is inspired by Kianto's own wife, whom he married in 1904.<sup>222</sup> They had a civil wedding in Sweden as it was not yet possible in Finland, a theme which is taken up in the novel. Civil marriage was a choice made as an act of defiance by a number of intellectuals as part of their programme of political resistance. Membership of the church was automatic at birth, and this as well as other religious formalities came to be viewed as a symbol of state control.

The respective choice of ideal in *Mat'* and *Pyhä viha* is also reflected elsewhere in these authors' work. They do explore other types as well, but these often suggest certain flaws and do not achieve a satisfactory synthesis. Gor'kii examines a type of desexed woman in a number of his portraits of revolutionary women. In his story *Romantik* (1910, 'The romancer'), the heroine feels she needs to annihilate her sexuality in order to take part in the cause. Virginity, in the form of the absence of a female sexual dimension, can suggest the independence required for super-human action. It harks back to such images of strength as, for example, the Greek goddess Artemis. Artemis, the huntress, who does not bleed herself (she does not menstruate), spills the blood of others. The same condition is implied in Lady Macbeth's plea to the gods to be 'unsexed' in order to gain the courage to commit murder. For Gor'kii, this solution is simply inadequate, and perhaps even ultimately pathetic. In *Romantik*, it only serves to draw closer attention to the heroine's sexuality. More sympathetic is Gor'kii's portrait in the same mould of the young woman, Sasha, one of the secondary characters in *Mat'*. Sasha is a revolutionary who is forced to deny her romantic love for the hero, Pavel, at his demand, for the sake of the cause. Sasha herself would like to marry, but accepts Pavel's demand for total commitment to their work at the expense of personal needs. Thus she does not deny her sexuality (although she possesses the austerity so frequently applied to the serious revolutionary), but her happiness. In this way she retains a sense of humanity, and consequently humility, bound up in her sacrifice. Woman's wilful indifference to her sexuality has often been identified as a force of evil, as in the case of Lady Macbeth. Woman's humble sacrifice of her calling of

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222 Kianto, *Moskovan maisteri*, Helsinki, 1946, p.517. Although he does not specifically mention Paula's characterization, he states that the novel records his experiences during this period, including his attempts to obtain a civil wedding.



wife and mother, on the other hand, is tinged with the humility of nuns. Like such brides of Christ, revolutionaries are brides of the cause, responding to a calling greater than individual will.<sup>223</sup>

It is this element which makes Sasha's virginity acceptable, but still not completely satisfactory. For Gor'kii the eternal Virgin is a concept which lacks both a link to the human life cycle and the fundamental vitality which he perceives in woman's sexual identity. Gor'kii far prefers to glorify woman's sensuality than to suppress it. His many portraits of prostitutes confirm his liberal attitude: he expresses sympathy for the abused, but, unlike Tolstoi, he retains his faith in their ever-present humanity. Gor'kii's fascination with the nature of woman's sexuality is revealed in the story *Mordovka* (1911, *The Mordvinian Girl*, 1954). The hero finds the role identities of the women around him puzzling: his wife, who is also a mother, the tender prostitute whose child is dead, his innocent daughter. They are not explored as types or individuals, but as roles which exist only in relation to the hero. They reflect Gor'kii's attempts to understand the nature and function of woman's sexual, social identity.

Gor'kii's portraits of beautiful, unrefined women, such as those of the title heroines of *Varen'ka Olesova* (1898, *Varenka Olessova*, 190-) or *Mal'va* (1897, *Malva*, 190-), are eulogies to woman's natural eroticism. The sensual but saintly Mal'va, whose soul does not 'match' her body, was once a mother. Although for the character Iakov this fact signifies that she is somehow tainted, for the reader it draws her closer to an image of the Virgin Mary, and to a view of her more complete womanliness. Mal'va and Varen'ka exude a vital energy which contrasts with the dry charm of cultivated cynical women such as Elizaveta Sergeevna in *Varen'ka Olesova*, whose childlessness is also clearly a negative feature. Varen'ka herself evokes all the desirability aroused by sexual provocation, yet retains a girlish ingenuousness.

Gor'kii's attitude towards women frequently appears paternalistic. Simultaneously, he expresses the firm conviction that the answer to woman's sexuality lies in her role as mother. The closest synthesis of

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223 The most powerful model of the warrior virgin must be Joan of Arc. Andrea Dworkin's analysis of the fact and fantasy around her figure reveals precisely this ambivalent attitude towards the vocational virgin. Joan was condemned partly because her 'desexing' of herself was not felt to contain sufficient humility. Dressing as a man was her own choice in order to save France, not part of God's command of how to do it. See Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse*, London, 1987, pp.83-105.



these views of woman's identity is to be found among the sketches of his wanderings through Russia *Po Rusi* (1912-17, *Through Russia: A Book of Stories*, 1932), in the stories *Rozhdenie cheloveka* (1912, *The Birth of Man* (sic), 1932), and *Zhenshchina* (1913, *A Woman*, 1932). In *Zhenshchina* he paints the portrait of an exceptional woman who is like a lone child and yet like the mother of thousands. The difficulties she faces arouses the narrator's desire to 'take her in his arms like a forsaken child,' while she herself 'would take all of them [the muzhiks] and give them a good place.'<sup>224</sup>

There is a strong association with the land in the description, as well as frequent reference to the woman's full breast, ripe for suckling. These motifs conjure the image of the universal earth mother, though circumstances here rob her of her destiny. In *Rozhdenie cheloveka* the supremacy of motherhood is achieved. The Madonna-like aspect of the main figure and the miraculous aspect of the birth are repeatedly evoked. The woman is tainted with shame but imbued with a sacred quality. The image of the woman giving birth and that of the Mother of God become interchangeable as the former continuously invokes the latter in rhythmic prayer.

Clearest evidence of Gor'kii's understanding of motherhood as the essence of the female being, and the importance of the Madonna as an image of the eternal mother, is to be found in his work *Ispoved'* (1908, *A Confession*, 1910). The book is a fictional record of the author's spiritual seekings in the years after the failure of the first revolution. It reveals many of the preoccupations which lay behind the characterization of Pelageia Nilovna in *Mat'*. In one scene the narrator encounters a nun, Khristina, kept in a convent against her will. Her only desire is to become a mother:

I want a little one of my own. If the first dies I will have another, and I will not let them take it from me; not let them rob me of my soul!<sup>225</sup>

At this point the narrator reflects:

We have forgotten that it was a woman who gave birth to Christ and humbly led him to Golgotha; we have forgotten that she is

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<sup>224</sup> Gor'kii, *Zhenshchina*, in *op.cit.*; Vol.8, p.116; 'на руки бы взять ее, как покинутого ребенка'; and 'взяла бы всех и поставила на хорошие места.'

<sup>225</sup> Gor'kii, *Ispoved'*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.5, p.256; 'Нужно мне младенца; если первый помер - другого хочу родить, и уж не позволю отнять его, огробить душу мою!'



the mother of all saints, of all great people in the past, and that, in our base covetousness, we have lost all sense of woman's worth, but have degraded her to the object of our enjoyment, to the level of a domestic animal burdened with labour. That is why woman no longer brings forth any redeemers, but only bears deformities, perpetuating our weakness.<sup>226</sup>

A small but significant detail in Gor'kii's fascination with motherhood is the fact that his own mother died when he was seven, as he records in his childhood memoirs, *Detstvo*. It was a lack which he felt deeply and for which he partly compensated in his relationship with his maternal grandmother.<sup>227</sup> Personal experience plays an equally decisive role in Kianto's fascination with woman's maidenhood. The diaries Kianto kept of his student days in Moscow between 1901 and 1903 reveal his passionate search for a wife, and the exacting requirements which defined his concept of ideal marital union. Published in 1946, the diaries include the added commentary of the mature Kianto. From these we learn that Kianto's liberalism did not include pre-marital sexual relations. He consciously restrained himself from consummating the many romantic liaisons he had before his marriage. When he was thirty years old he married a woman of twenty-two. The record of his period in Moscow outlines many of the views on women, marriage and woman's role in political life, which emerge in his later fiction.

Kianto seeks an erotic chastity. In *Moskovan maisteri* he refers to all the women he has encountered who showed an interest in him as 'hetaera', despite the fact that one is entering a convent (apparently on his account), and one is close to starving in abject poverty.<sup>228</sup> This facile suggestion of sexual impurity occurs not only because the women were tainted with romantic interest, but also:

because his heart overflowed with the memory of Finland's womanhood as soon as his foot touched the soil of his native land.<sup>229</sup>

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226 *ibid.*, p.257; 'Забыли мы, что женщина Христа родила и на Голгофу покорно проводила его; забыли, что она мать всех святых и прекрасных людей прошлого, и в подлой жадности нашей потеряли цену женщине, обращаем ее в утеху для себя да в домашнее животное для работы; оттого она и не родит больше спасителей жизни, а только уродцев сеет в ней, плодя слабость нашу.'

227 Borras, *op.cit.*, p.23.

228 Kianto, *Moskovan maisteri*, p.186; 'hetairat'.

229 *ibid.*, p.186; 'sillä hänen sydämensä tulvahti täyteen Suomi-naisen muistoa heti kun hän jalkansa oman maan kamaralle laski'.



The sexual promise that Kianto perceives as the essence of woman's being becomes closely fused with notions of nationhood. At the same time, one of the most negative aspects of woman's active participation was to be found, in Kianto's view, among the austere Russian revolutionaries. At best, he could sympathize with their dedication only insofar as it signified devotion to husbands or lovers, such as in those women who followed their men to Siberia. Otherwise the severity of the demonstrating and frequently arrested *kursistki* was intolerable to him. He writes:

The Russian *kursistki* (...) have become even more antipathetic to me. Today one of them was talking about a young student who had shot himself when the police had come to arrest him in the night. She called him a martyr, wretched and mad. Such heartless wenches I am forced to sit and eat with every day.<sup>230</sup>

The denial of women's sexuality which, to Kianto no less than to so many others, typified the women involved in revolutionary activity, appears to have been an even less viable female alternative for him than for Gor'kii. On several occasions Kianto writes of the 'unwomanliness' of choosing spinsterhood, of woman's rejection of sexual desire as 'unnatural'.<sup>231</sup> Nevertheless, such desire in a woman ideally surfaces only with the consciousness brought by man, as in *Pyhä viha*. Ignorance, but not absence, of desire preserves the purity of virginity yet implies the promise of a sublime love discovered in consummation.

Influenced by Tolstoi's asceticism in his early years, Kianto found it difficult to formulate the basis for a suitable emotional relationship between men and women. His attempts to resolve this lead him to the image of the Madonna, pure but erotic, in his characterization of his heroines. The innocence of Milka Sorgen in *Sieluja kevät yössä* (1907, 'Souls in the spring night'), and the spirituality of Nirvana Napoleonovna in *Nirvana* (1907), both kindle the hero's desires. In the latter novel, the myth of the Virgin Mary provides the unequivocal symbol of the hero's ideal of womanhood. In *Moskovan maisteri*, it

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230 *ibid.*, p.343; 'Venäläiset kursistkat (...) ovat käyneet minulle yhä antipaattisemmaksi. Tänään yksi heistä jutteli nuoresta ylioppilaasta, joka santarmin tullessa yöllä häntä vangitsemaan ampui itsensä. Kursistka tuomitsi hänet marttyyriksi, raukaksi ja hulluksi. Niin sydämettömiä naikkosia istuu joka päivä siinä pöydässä, jossa minun täytyy ateroida.'

231 *ibid.*, p.408; he mentions the 'unnatural paths' ('luonnottomia teitä') of a woman wanting to remain unmarried, and refers to the 'unfeminine letter' (p.410; 'epänaiselliseen kirjeeseen') of a woman expressing this view.



becomes clear that for Kianto the heroine's real life counterpart, Nina von Neimann, epitomized 'the bride of Christ'.<sup>232</sup> He saw no future in their relationship, however, because she was Russian: 'the fatherland shatters my heart's emotions by force.'<sup>233</sup>

For Kianto the link between nationhood and a feminine ideal becomes a powerful symbol. He wore the traditional Finnish white student's cap at the May Day celebrations when he was in Moscow. As a symbol of Finland:

the student's cap was like a pure, untouched virgin, "beloved maidenhead", which was a holy carress for the nerves, which must not be disgraced.<sup>234</sup>

Like the author himself, the hero of *Nirvana* also fails to approach his virginal idol. Kianto's search for a Madonna ideal with whom to share his political convictions and religious redirection was finally resolved in the figure of Paula Winterberg in *Pyhä viha*. Kianto's later work also demonstrates that the bride figure was to remain the idealized principle of his concept of womanhood. Kianto, like Solmu Karm in *Nirvana* 'wanted to kiss his woman...a first and last time.'<sup>235</sup>

The consummation and the auspicious act of impregnation represented perfect fulfilment. Long-term motherhood and marriage, on the other hand, could not sustain his faith in either womanhood or spiritual harmony. Marriage destroyed the ideal of the Madonna as bride, as is evident in the sequel to *Pyhä viha*, *Pyhä rakkaus* (1910, 'Sacred love'). In this novel, marital union and motherhood bring sorrow and domestic tension. Kianto's novel of the promises and disappointments of the first Finnish elections also casts motherhood in a negative light. In *Punainen viiva*, motherhood is portrayed in all the cruel realities of the harsh conditions of the backwoods, with too many children to care for and women old before their time. The novel no longer evokes hope in the future, but rather records disillusionment with the achievements of the elected Social Democratic Party. Its heroine, Riika, penetrates the outside world and participates in political life alongside her husband, but she is by no means an ideal element in

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232 *ibid.*, p.38; 'Kristuksen morsian'.

233 *ibid.*, p.34; 'isänmaa särkee väkistenkin sydämeni tunteet.'

234 *ibid.*, p.479, 'ylioppilaslakki oli kuin puhdas, koskematon neitsyt, "immyt armas", joka hiveli hermoja pyhästi ja jota ei saanut häväistä.'

235 Kianto, *Nirvana*, in *Valitut teokset*, Vol.1, p.231; 'tahtoi naistaan suudella...ensimmäisen ja viimeisen kerran.'



the political struggle. For Kianto the word 'nainen' (woman) holds special charm notably in its distinction from 'tyttö' (girl). In his stories from Karelia, which express his deepest emotions about the true virtues of the Finns and their land, he dwells on the use of the word 'nainen' in Karelian dialect. For the Karelians the word denotes:

*married* woman (*naitu nainen*) and never a maiden as in our own falsely respectable Finland.<sup>236</sup>

#### 2.4 The Madonna as Universal Mother and National Bride

In Gor'kii's *Mat'* and Kianto's *Pyhä viha*, the respective significance of Pelageia's motherhood and Paula's eligibility extends far beyond their personal lives. Pelageia's relationship to her son and Paula's relationship to the man who becomes her husband are starting points for their political consciousness. This in turn carries their roles as mother and bride into the fuller drama of national and human destiny. The socio-political dimension is developed alongside a spiritual angle. The characters serve to examine the female image within contemporary debate over Christianity and the role of the church.

The religious preoccupations of the period were a focal point in the discussion on the direction of the nation. The established church in both countries seemed overwhelmed by an intransigence of form and regulations which had nothing to do with true faith. The church was moreover closely linked to the state. In Russia, the church was empowered to enlist civil and police powers in defence of Orthodoxy.<sup>237</sup> In Finland the church became closely identified with oppression as the clergy were required to disseminate the stipulations of imperial decrees to their congregations.<sup>238</sup> After the disturbances of 1905, the church became an even more vociferously conservative element. It argued that Christianity and socialism were incompatible, since there was a basic contradiction between the enmity of the class struggle and the teaching of love. For the intellectual milieu of both Finland and Russia the church represented a repressive institution, which sought only to preserve the most unhealthy aspects of social and moral codes of

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<sup>236</sup> Kianto, *Suloisessa Suomessamme* ('In our sweet Finland'), Helsinki, 1925, p.10;

'*naitua* naista eikä ikinä neiti-ihmistä kuten meillä täällä tekosiveässä Suomessa.'

<sup>237</sup> Gerhard Simon, 'Church, State and Society' in Oberländer et al., eds, *op.cit.*, p.199. For an assessment of the church's links to the autocracy see pp.199-205.

<sup>238</sup> Kirby, *op.cit.*, p.28.



conduct. The search for a new Christianity was a drive towards the spiritual rebirth of the nation as well as of the individual. Writers' criticism of the Orthodox and the Lutheran churches, often in keeping with the most basic principle of Tolstoi's teachings, centred on the distinction between church doctrine and religious faith.

#### 2.4.1 Gor'kii's Pelageia Nilovna

The religious aspirations which Gor'kii had acquired as a child from his grandparents surfaced more forcefully in the atmosphere of dejection, which prevailed after the failure of the 1905 revolution. In the novel *Mat'*, the author attempts to reconcile the cause of the Russian revolution with a fundamentally Christian view of freedom and justice, while rejecting the negative aspects of a blind faith in God. The novel's central character, Pelageia Nilovna, emerges from her fear and resignation, fostered by her slavish adherence to Orthodox teachings, in order to accept the need for action on behalf of Christ's word. Pelageia's fear is symbolic of the old world. It acts as an obstacle to her political emancipation. By overcoming that fear she becomes fully committed to the revolution. She does not abandon her basic faith, but she rejects the practice of passive, ignorant worship, which she replaces with active work for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. Part II of the novel, which begins after the arrest of Pelageia's son at the end of the previous chapter, opens with a dream sequence in which she sees a priest in league with the police. This symbolic recognition of the official church in league with the oppressors marks a turning point for her faith. She has adopted a deeper spirituality. Later the message of her dream sequence is compounded by her real experience when she witnesses the arrest of the peasant Rybin, denounced as a revolutionary by a priest in Chapter 15.

The dream scene also contains explicit imagery of Pelageia as the mother of Christ. The dream enables Gor'kii to portray her suckling her child, the only biological function, other than weeping, attributed to the Madonna. The imagery marks Pelageia's transition from the local to the universal in the development of her character. The detail of lactation exploits both the Orthodox emphasis on the Madonna as the mother of the redeemer and its notion of Mary's common bond with humanity. The significance of Pelageia's role as the mother of the redeemer is



reinforced towards the second half of Part II. After the death of a comrade, the young revolutionary woman Sasha expresses her belief in the immortality of honest people. Pavel, Pelageia's son and martyr to the cause, must be counted among the individuals who convey immortality. The mother becomes easily equated with the 'mother of all saints, of all great people' whom Gor'kii describes in *Ispoved'*.

The nature of Pelageia's motherhood proceeds through several stages. She evolves from a narrow individual concerned only for her own and her son's safety, through Christian self-knowledge, into an integrated element of a wide-reaching movement. At the beginning of Part II, after the arrest of her son and his friend:

her eyes were fixed on all that was now past, on all that had left her along with Andrei and Pavel.<sup>239</sup>

Her sense of loss is contrasted with her recollections of her early, imperfect motherhood in an incident from the past, when she used her two-year-old son to protect herself from the blows of her husband. Her reaction of self-protection with the body of a child is a sign of a graver weakness in the whole fabric of an existence dictated by a hierarchy of abuse. It is clear that, although now she is lonely, she is united with her son on a much deeper level, and it is for universal protection that she must now expose him to the blows dealt by the state. Her experience has also transformed her own self-perception as a mother. In the first part of the novel, her participation is inextricably linked with her emotional dependence on her son. At the time of her first involvement with his work, her motivation is primarily selfish. It stems from her:

bitterness and hatred for people who deprive mothers of their sons simply because the sons seek justice.<sup>240</sup>

Later she wins her son's tenderness by letting him know she has been distributing leaflets, which provokes Andrei's comment: 'People seek all sorts of things, but a mother always seeks love.'<sup>241</sup>

By the latter part of this section of the book, Pelageia's character already evokes a strong element of self-sacrifice, merging her private

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239 Gor'kii, *Mat'*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.270; 'глаза ее неподвижно разглядывали то, что уже стало прошлым, ушло от нее вместе с Андреем и Павлом.'

240 *ibid.*, p.199; 'ожесточение и злоба на людей, которые отнимают у матери сына за то, что сын ищет правду.'

241 *ibid.*, p.224; 'Кто чего ищет, а мать - всегда ласки.'



relationship with her son with a more distant image of the weeping Madonna. Pavel demands her total selflessness:

When will there be mothers who send their children to death with a smile?<sup>242</sup>

To this she replies tearfully that her compassion 'is only natural for a mother'.<sup>243</sup> The enriching self-sacrifice which is cultivated by Pelageia's relationship with her son also expresses revolutionary purpose. She is:

filled with the desire to unite her heart with her son's heart to form one great flame.<sup>244</sup>

Alongside her unity with Pavel, Gor'kii develops her role as mother of the children of God. The earliest sign of this is her suggestion of taking Andrei in as a lodger, the first step in the extension of her 'family'. Later, in a discussion over the nature of a woman's and especially a mother's love, she concludes that her love is impure because, as she says: 'I love my own, what's close to me!'<sup>245</sup> Andrei tells her: 'You can do great things, because you have a great mother love in you.'<sup>246</sup> Andrei asks her to show some affection to Nikolai Vesovshchikov, a development which is another sign of her growing family. The request underlines the need and potential for Pelageia's maternal love to become all-embracing within the cause, since this particular member of their group is personally antipathetic to her. Indeed her relationship with both Nikolai and Andrei ultimately symbolize her awareness of her broader significance as a mother figure. By the penultimate chapter of Part I, she takes hold of Nikolai's hand during the demonstration. The section ends with her all-encompassing plea on behalf of 'our blood', 'our children'.<sup>247</sup>

The climax of Part I also indicates the change in her religious perception, and thus draws together the various strands in her role as mother. Her subsequent symbolic dream, which casts her in the role of the mother of Christ, extends the Madonna imagery to that of mother of all humanity, as she walks pregnant with a child in her arms. Pavel is in

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242 *ibid.*, p.236; 'Когда будут матери, которые и на смерть пошлют своих детей с радостью?'

243 *ibid.*, p.236; 'это уж материнское'.

244 *ibid.*, p.245; 'полная желаний слить свое сердце с сердцем сына в один огонь.'

245 *ibid.*, p.213; 'Я люблю свое, близкое!'

246 *ibid.*, p.213; 'Вы много можете. Велико у вас материнское.'

247 *ibid.*, pp.267-68; 'кровь наша', 'дети наши'.



the distance in her dream, and during the trial in Part II, she turns from her son towards Andrei, feeling he needs her affection more than Pavel does.<sup>248</sup> In the second half of the novel, Pelageia understands more clearly that her private, motherly love represents a danger to the revolutionary cause, because when she thinks of her son 'the mother in her would crowd out the greater humanity.'<sup>249</sup>

It is Pelageia's constant struggle against the negative impulse of her selfish maternal instincts which gives her character its dramatic quality. From her acceptance of her son's martyrdom as a Christ figure at the end of Part I, to the extension of her love to the children of the revolution, the religious dimension embellishes the notion of her universal motherhood. She finally asserts that people are 'all children of one mother'.<sup>250</sup> Although Gor'kii's reworkings of the text between 1907 and 1923 removed much of the unequivocal religious details in her speech and role,<sup>251</sup> the mythology of her motherhood remains powerfully evoked. Gor'kii's glorification of the mother as an active force in the revolution, as a disciple of progressive ideology fused with a renewed spiritual religion adhering to the teachings of Christ rather than the dogma of the church, is a formidable image of devotion and self-sacrifice. Pelageia Nilovna emerges as an ideal of loyalty, humility and love in the unmistakable mould of the *Bogamateri* (Mother of God).

#### 2.4.2 Kianto's Paula Winterberg

In Kianto's novel *Pyhä viha*, Paula Winterberg represents a parallel vision of glorified womanhood symbolizing national loyalty and active participation. It is Paula's function as a bride which lends her a dramatic and symbolic quality. Paula's development is linked to the questions of religion and national destiny raised by the novel. Kianto himself was a pastor's son, like the male hero of the novel. Reino Frommerus, like the author, rejects many of the principles of institutionalized religion in

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248 This is not to imply that Pavel is not the focus of the trial scene (and of Pelageia's concern), only that Pelageia's maternal love now extends beyond a private to a collective emotion.

249 Gor'kii, *Mat'*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.326; 'материнское мешало росту человеческого.'

250 *ibid.*, p.399; 'дети одной матери'.

251 Richard Freeborn, *The Russian Revolutionary Novel*, Cambridge, 1982. The author lists the reworkings in footnote 6, pp.265-66, and comments on the reduced religious aspect of the mother's role as a result of the revisions on p.51.



favour of a simpler faith based on compassion and sincerity. Kianto's ideas were heavily influenced by Tolstoi. In the novel, Reino gives his father a copy of Tolstoi's *Gospel* to read. Reino frequently challenges the validity of religious doctrine for its lack of what he terms 'imagination'.<sup>252</sup> By this he means a spiritual dimension. Early in the novel he questions the use of such terms as heaven, hell, sin, angel, as well as the place of Christ, Buddha and Mohammed in a universal faith. The portrayal of Reino is more elaborate and central to the novel than that of Pavel in *Mat'*. Reino's relationship to the religious theme as well as to Paula has none of the force of Christ-like martyrdom and redemption which characterize Pavel. On the other hand, Reino is strongly characterized as a prophet, a wanderer spreading the new teachings of a more genuine faith. His surname, 'Fromm', is the Swedish word for 'pious'.

In the first stages of the novel Reino's intellectual life is marked by tension and frustration. He is an ascetic, and it is Paula's presence which introduces love, and a greater humanity, into his world-view. Paula does not appear until the eighth chapter of the novel, once Reino's thoughts and experiences have provided the reader with an understanding of his philosophical outlook. Henceforth the theoretical debate over marriage, and the actual marriage which unites Paula and Reino towards the end of the novel, take on religious-political significance for the two characters. Paula is tied to the church by her profession as deaconness, and consequently adheres to certain moral conventions. Nevertheless, she is relatively quick to adopt her suitor's liberal views of a natural bond between man and woman. During the early stages of their friendship, Paula expresses her gratitude towards Reino for never having made improper sexual advances towards her. She also wishes to have their wedding sanctified by a priest. It is not long, however, before Paula agrees to a civil marriage and, moreover, she freely 'gives' herself sexually to Reino before the formalities have taken place. Both of these actions demonstrate her enlightened ability to perceive their union as sacred without being dependent on the official approval of either church or law. Their marriage is a fundamental rejection of the old order. Reino sees civil marriage, not legally recognized in Finland at this point, as a topical issue which symbolizes a

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252 Kianto, *Pyhä viha*, in *Valitut teokset*, Vol.2, p.174; 'mielikuvituksen'.



stand against the state. Stating that they will have to take refuge in the legal system of another country in order to marry, Reino adds:

Finland and Russia are the only states in Europe where men in black coats force people to dance to their tune. And everyone humbly complies, even those who rebel in their thoughts.(...) If we all waited for holy legal reforms, laws would not be changed in this country till the end of time. No! All idealistic struggle for freedom is revolutionary.<sup>253</sup>

Both the church and the autocracy are targets of revolutionary struggle:

Civil marriage in Finland is rebellion against the "Christian social order", and all rebellion is struggle against the enemy.<sup>254</sup>

In the following chapters, Paula and Reino try to obtain permission for a civil marriage abroad, and return home after they finally succeed in England. Paula has adopted the 'truth' which underlies her husband's ideology in contrast to the hypocrisy of the official church. Like Pelageia in *Mat'*, she is politically emancipated by her rejection of the formal church. The link between church and state authority is further reinforced in a conversation between Paula and the local priest, Rynttänen. The priest visits her in order to question her status and attitude. He challenges her on moral, political and religious grounds. Here the defence of liberal ideology is made by Paula herself. The key feature of Paula's position is to be accepted as Reino's bride despite the absence of a church ceremony. Rynttänen and other disapproving members of the community slander her by inferring that she is Reino's 'companion' rather than his 'wife'.<sup>255</sup> This motif is part of the recurrent association made between freedom within marriage and freedom within the state.

After the birth of the couple's first child, the matter of the baby's christening joins with the issue of a church wedding as matters of

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253 *ibid.*, p.225; 'Suomi ja Venäjä ovat ainoat valtiot Europassa, jossa mustatakkiset pakottavat ihmiset tanssimaan oman paimensoittonsa mukaan. Ja kaikki nöyrästi taipuvat, nekin jotka mielessään kapinoivat.(...) Jos jokainen lain pyhää korjausta jäisi odottamaan, niin ei tässä maassa kuuna kulan valkeana lakia muutettaisi. Ei! Kaikki ihanteellinen vapaustaistelu on vallankumouksellista..'

254 *ibid.*, p.241; 'Siviliavioliitto Suomessa on kapinaa "kristillistä yhteiskuntajärjestystä" vastaan, ja kaikki kapinallisuus on taistelua vihollista vastaan.'

255 *ibid.*, p.296-97. They have been registered as man and wife in church records by Reino's father, unjustifiably according to Rynttänen, who will refer only to Reino Frommerus 'and his companion' ('ja hänen toverinsa').



constitutional importance for Rynttänen. The couple's marital situation becomes a public issue of debate, with an open letter in the press. The marriage reaches its climax as a reflection of political crisis in the pages preceding the description of the 1905 General Strike. Kianto repeatedly uses the theme of Reino's and Paula's relationship to reflect the political developments of the day. Reino distinguishes between existing constitutional law and constitutional ideals. The latter represents national loyalty, since:

Civil marriage and the rejection of christening are not the inventions of Bobrikov.<sup>256</sup>

After the Strike he experiences a strong faith in the Finnish people:

The real spirit of constitutionalism could not place itself in opposition to the country's needs for internal reforms. If it did so, then it had its roots in Russian patriotism, in the most intolerant form of national chauvinism, with its stagnant imperialism and worship of religious tyranny.<sup>257</sup>

In the aftermath of the strike, Reino sets off around the country to campaign in the coming elections. Paula's contribution to the cause will be that of the ideal wife and mother: it is she who proposes that he undertake this important activity, while she will suffer the separation and stay at home to look after their child. The symbolism included in Paula's characterization reflects the nature of Reino's political action. For Reino as for Kianto:

organized socialism wrought unrestrained havoc among the Finnish nation, but it also executed incredibly important building work, just what he, Reino Frommerus, as an individual had dreamed of.<sup>258</sup>

Paula will remain in Karelia, a location which bears strong nationalistic implications for Kianto and other Finnish writers of the day. By the end

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256 *ibid.*, p.348; 'Siviliavioliitto ja kasteen hylkäys eivät ole mitään bobrikoffilaisuuksia..'

257 *ibid.*, p.386; 'Todellinen perustuslaillinen henki ei saanut asettua vihamieliseksi maan sisällisille uudistusvaatimuksille. Jos se sen teki, niin se oli sukua venäläiselle patriotismille, keisariuttansa märehtivälle, kirkkotyranniuttansa jumaloivalle, suvaitsemattomimmalle kansallisitserakkaudelle.'

258 *ibid.*, p.393; 'Järjestyvä sosialismi teki häikäilemätöntä hävitystyötänsä Suomen kansassa, mutta - se teki myös uskomattoman tärkeätä rakennustyötä, juuri sitä, josta hän, yksilö Reino Frommerus, oli unelmoinut.'



of the novel, Paula's character has made the transition from ordinary woman to symbolic icon of the Finnish cause. She is the ideal Madonna image behind Reino's now vociferous challenge of the church's teachings:

not born of the *virgin* Mary, a thousand times no: but born of the *woman* (*vaimo*) Mary.<sup>259</sup>

In *Pyhä viha*, Kianto's vehement refutation of the virgin birth does not preclude an idealization of woman in the form of a Madonna Virgin, who becomes the Madonna Mother without tainting her image with the existence of her sexuality. As well as Paula's literal innocence of men, her virginity is marked by the absence of any sexual self-awareness. As such she is worshipped by Reino. The Virgin is the ideal to which religious men should turn to for comfort in moments of sensual troubling. Reino considers himself 'dead with regard to women' until he meets Paula, whose purity inspires him with a sublime love.<sup>260</sup>

Paula embodies Kianto's understanding of Mary's religious significance as a bride, which he interprets on a national and universal level in the novel. The identity of bride dominates Reino's vision of womanhood. Before his meeting with Paula, he refers not to Christ born of the 'virgin' or 'wife' Mary, but of the 'bride Mary'.<sup>261</sup> He describes his newly kindled love as a Phoenix rising from the ashes,<sup>262</sup> a not uncommon symbol of revolution at the turn of the century. Paula herself is constantly referred to as a bride. She is also Reino's 'reindeer-girl',<sup>263</sup> an epithet which associates her with his most poetic symbol of freedom, national identity and unspoilt nature.

One of the implications in the myth of Mary as the bride of Christ is partnership. Kianto uses this idea, at least superficially, in the notion of equal suffrage as one of the cornerstones of the political ambitions for the future with which the novel concludes. Any notions of equality implied by the concept of male-female unity did not, however, overshadow the idealization of woman's humility as a bride. In Paula's

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259 *ibid.*, p.399; '*ei neitseestä Maariasta syntynyt, tuhat kertaa ei: vaan vaimosta Maariasta syntynyt.*' (Italics in original.)

260 *ibid.*, p.185; '*naismaailmalle kuolleena*'.

261 *ibid.*, p.176; '*morsiamesta Maariasta*'.

262 *ibid.*, p.185; '*Fenix-lintu kohota harmaasta tuhasta*'.

263 *ibid.*, e.g. p.214; '*porotyttönsä*'.



feminine spirit, it is her loyal submissiveness which evokes the quality of allegiance. Consummation parallels the national unity achieved immediately after the Strike. Paula's marriageable potential is carried through several changes in the construction of a feminine ideal within the struggle for national self-determination. She begins, unenlightened but open, as an ordinary woman bound by the conventions of the church. She accepts progressive principles which bring to her status of wife a political dimension as well as a revitalized spirituality. By the close of the novel, her character transcends an immediate presence. She is a remote, eternal ideal of womanly potential in the harmony of union, a symbol of future ambitions.

#### 2.4.3 Paradoxical Imagery

Pelageia Nilovna and Paula Winterberg represent models of active, politically conscious women whose ambitions look forward to a time of equality and justice, as well as spiritual integrity. Their concern is for the rights of the people, the native land, the new era of enlightenment. They participate in resistance to the old order according to the requirements of their time. Pelageia emerges from her blind and oppressive faith, Paula from the restrictions of church doctrine, to embrace a free, compassionate understanding of truth and humanity. They both make a specific break from formal religion in a manner appropriate to the nature of their belief: Pelageia in her dream sequence which casts the priest in league with the police, and Paula in her conversation with Rynttänen which associates him with the oppressive measures instituted by Bobrikov. Their characters exist as an example of resistance to church and state. This resistance includes a specifically feminine, symbolic dimension as a positive, progressive force of opposition to the present incompetent authorities.

Both contexts convey another important break from the old order. Pelageia's and Paula's awareness leads them out of the private domain, clearly indicated as woman's traditional place, and into the public, alongside men. For Pelageia, this means her activities in the revolutionary movement, culminating in the final pages of the book where she is distributing leaflets bearing the text of the speech her son made at his trial. In Paula's case, her status as a wife becomes the subject of public debate related to the issue of constitutional rights. Both



characters accept their new responsibilities willingly and overcome any fears and apprehensions that their position awakens in them.

Pelageia's and Paula's new consciousness thus forces them to participate in a form of resistance which affects them both as individuals, in their political opposition to church and state, and as women, in their new-found active and public roles. Nevertheless, this aspect of their respective characterization does not provide a substantial reassessment of their social and psychological roles as women. It is not clear to what extent their conduct or their mental processes really suggest a new model of womanhood. It is also difficult to estimate how far the powerful imagery of mother and bride can furnish a picture of the female psychology of emancipation. Neither woman cultivates an awareness of her exploitation nor of her political role as a woman. This fact shows a neglect of one of the most common facets of women's universal political experience. This was certainly a familiar facet in both Finland and Russia within the movements leading to revolution and independence.

In both Finland and Russia, the incorporation of women in the political struggle lost them a certain amount of feminist autonomy, a consequence not expected by women activists themselves. Aleksandra Kollontai may have criticized bourgeois women for a self-interest which ignored the needs of the great majority of women, but she was equally aggravated by the socialists' refusal to acknowledge separate women's organizations within the workers' movement.<sup>264</sup> For Kollontai and other members of the women's movement, their participation in organized socialism did not signify the capitulation of their left-wing feminist consciousness. They experienced a similar sense of disillusion as those women who had been absorbed into the revolutionary movement in the 1860s. Many of these women soon became unhappily aware of their subordinate position, as activities were dictated by men and they themselves were used for menial tasks or to obtain money from their relatives or by taking rich lovers.<sup>265</sup> When the October manifesto of 1905 was prepared without discussion of women's rights, many women who split from the moderates, like Maria Chekhova and

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<sup>264</sup> Porter, *op.cit.*, p.130.

<sup>265</sup> Engel, *op.cit.*, pp.86-105. Engel outlines this and other aspects of the exploitation of women in the radical movement.



Zinaida Mirovich, were militant in their declaration that women's rights were inseparable from the fight for political freedom in Russia.

In Finland, Ida Ahlstedt, a member of the Social Democratic Party elected to the first Finnish parliament in 1906, is just one example of left-wing women in Finland who were also active in the women workers' movement. Of the members on the right, the distinguished names included those of veterans of the women's rights movement, such as Alexandra Gripenberg and Lucina Hagman. Women who did not participate in politics, but who were no less active in the pressure for reforms affecting general education and employment, did not lose sight of women's specific case. Minna Canth, for example, took an interest in the matter of training women doctors and opening women's clinics.<sup>266</sup> She even broke off her friendship with her close male ally, Juhani Aho, as a direct result of his complacency with regard to the woman question.<sup>267</sup>

This is an aspect of women's political consciousness which is completely ignored by many literary descriptions of active or public women, and not least in *Mat'* and *Pyhä viha*. While challenging the very constructs of the existing hierarchy, neither Gor'kii nor Kianto makes any attempt to undermine the established male-female hierarchy. However, it is not a lack of feminist consciousness which maintains these heroines in their traditional place. This is an omission which tells us no more than that the authors did not wish to treat this subject. It is rather that which is included than that which is excluded that confirms women's traditional role as the ideal within otherwise progressive ideologies and movements. In one sense, this realistically reflects women's position in relation to contemporary ideology. Although the whole-hearted adoption of masculine priorities is not necessarily representative of women's own experience, it is representative of the views widely held about women's emancipation. While right-wing feminism never questioned the 'natural' hierarchy of men over women, socialism insisted that the liberation of women was only possible as a logical consequence of the liberation of the people (=men). In both cases, the value of expanding women's sphere remained a consideration subordinate to the ideology of marriage and motherhood.

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266 Canth, *Kirjeitä vuosilta 1860-1897*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.5, pp.409-10.

267 *ibid.*, pp.200-01.



Pelageia's and Paula's acceptance of the politics of men is only part of their failure to suggest a new model of womanhood. The fact that they adopt the philosophy of son and husband respectively is conceivably no less implausible than a political awakening through any other channel, even though the male duty of re-educating women is a persistent and possibly overplayed theme among male writers. More limiting aspects of their character development are the manner in which they achieve their consciousness, and the role they play within the movement. In their attempt to create a specifically feminine motivation and symbolism, Gor'kii and Kianto rely on popular mystification of the essence of the female being. The acceptance of public duty is after all, evidence of exceptional courage because it consists in the suppression of their natural inclination towards privacy. The qualifications of woman's 'nature' are carefully defined. Paula relates to her husband the incident in which she was forced to withstand Rynttänen's attack on her sexual morality, on her loyalty to the nation, and on her spiritual sanity. She concludes:

I would sooner climb with you onto a pyre than allow them to take you from me<sup>268</sup>

to which Reino rejoins: 'yes that is how things are according to woman's nature.'<sup>269</sup> Pelageia's ideals are likewise motivated by her 'nature' as a mother:

leave my heart alone! Can a mother help caring? She can't...I care for you all.<sup>270</sup>

It is not for nothing that it is the text of her son's speech, rather than any other leaflets, that she is distributing in the final chapter. Her dramatic role would be considerably reduced if she were to undertake political work which was not directly related to her son, since throughout the novel it is her motherhood, not her political activism, which carries the impact of her role.

Neither woman, moreover, reaches her level of awareness through a process of intellectual reasoning, but through an intuitive

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268 Kianto, *Pyhä viha*, in *Valitut teokset*, Vol.2, p.326; 'Ennen minä sinun kanssasi kiipeän polttorviolle kuin annan raastaa sinut minusta erilleen.'

269 *ibid.*, p.326; 'niin se onkin naisluonteen kannalta.'

270 Gor'kii, *Mat'*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.238; 'не задевай сердца! Разве может мать не желать? Не может...Всех жалко мне!'



understanding which is a dominant feature of her personality. Pavel, with his frosty deliberation and articulate speeches, is the intellect behind the movement, while Pelageia is the heart. Throughout the novel, Gor'kii stresses the passion in her response to the cause. She repeatedly fails to grasp the meaning of words, but is always inspired by the force of emotions. She cannot understand the level of discussion, but understands the faith and courage behind the arguments. When her son and his friends join to sing a socialist song during an early meeting in her home:

The mother did not like its harsh words and stern tune, but (...) sensed that it lived within them, and submitting to a force that overran the boundaries of words and music, she listened with greater attention and deeper agitation to this song than any other.<sup>271</sup>

This remains her approach even once she is fully involved in the movement. When she is present at meetings in Nikolai's home, she cannot follow the conversation but seeks 'the meaning behind the words'.<sup>272</sup> Even in the penultimate chapter she herself states: 'I don't understand the words, but I understand everything else.'<sup>273</sup>

Pelageia never finds her own logic or articulation of the ideology she adopts, even when she manages to communicate its purpose to the hesitant peasants she finds herself among in the countryside. When she tries to explain the unity of the people she 'could not find the right words'.<sup>274</sup> When the words come they come of themselves, in a manner which likens her to a 'seer', to the women of religious revivals speaking in a state of ecstasy:

In unconscious obedience to this demand of her wholesome spirit, she gathered all that was pure and bright into one great flame, which blinded her with the intensity of its burning.<sup>275</sup>

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271 *ibid.*, p.176; Резкие слова и суровый напев ее не нравились матери, но (...) она чувствовала в их грудях и, поддаваясь силе песни, не умещавшейся в словах и звуках, всегда слушала ее с особенным вниманием, с тревогой более глубокой, чем все другие песни.'

272 *ibid.*, p.302; 'за словами чувство'.

273 *ibid.*, p.398; 'Слов не понимаю, а все другое - понимаю.'

274 *ibid.*, p.344; 'нужное слово не находилось.'

275 *ibid.*, p.345; 'Бессознательно подчиняясь этому требованию здоровой души, она собирала все, что видела светлого и чистого, в один огонь, ослеплявший ее своим чистым горением.'



Pelageia's instinctive response to the 'truth' of her son's ideals could in part be explained by her religious approach to life, which relies on faith rather than logic. Nevertheless, it is her gender rather than a religious world-view which determines her intuitive qualities. The characterization of the peasant Rybin also includes a strong religious dimension as he too seeks a new Christianity, but he intellectualizes his situation, and is able to argue his differing point of view with Pavel. Rybin, as a man, gives an intellectual dimension to the 'philosophy of the heart', which the mother cannot, as it is incompatible with feminine nature.

Paula's intellect is similarly bound by the myth of feminine intuitiveness. She is equally incapable of forming her own rationalization of the ideology she approves. She senses the truth behind her husband's speech on marriage. When she defends herself against accusations of amorality she is careful to remember and repeat her husband's words. Another reason for her acceptance of Reino's new morality is that her former views were not the result of an intellectual process. She desires a marriage sanctified by the church chiefly in order to avoid gossip, rather than because she has considered the religious or moral significance of such a tradition. Woman's ostensible preoccupation with petty conventions is the myth of feminine intellect which Kianto chooses to dwell upon in his characterization of Paula. Women are not expected to grasp the fundamental 'idea'. Just as Pavel says to his mother that he thought 'our thoughts would never become your thoughts,'<sup>276</sup> Reino explains to Paula that he is aware that:

*I myself* have reached this level of development, but if it is superhuman then let it be so.<sup>277</sup>

Reino is willing to take into account 'woman's level of maturity', which means Paula must consider her reputation.<sup>278</sup> A civil marriage will at least provide her with 'that "honour" which women need'.<sup>279</sup> The hero magnanimously makes a concession to women's unreasonable demand for the preservation of their respectability. Paula's initial concern over marital form is practical, and Kianto makes it clear that Reino's

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276 *ibid.*, p.232; 'не примешь наши мысли, как свои.'

277 Kianto, *Pyhä viha*, *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.222; '*Minä olen sillä kehityskannalla. Jos se on yli-ihmistä, niin olkoon.*' (Italics in original.)

278 *ibid.*, p.224; 'naisen kypsyysaste'.

279 *ibid.*, p.224; '"kunnian", mitä naiset tarvitsevat'.



condescension to a civil ceremony is purely a consideration of her needs. That this is a chiefly female prejudice is underlined in Reino's conversation with his sisters early in the novel, when they refuse to accept 'unconsecrated union' on the grounds of 'woman's honour', while he puts forward a defence of common law marriage.<sup>280</sup> It is this preoccupation with the mundane cares of society which prevents women from confronting ideas in the abstract. Paula's vision merely exchanges one concept of bridal ritual for another, without questioning the meaning of either.

Both Reino and Pavel accept that, while their own ideological commitment exists on a visionary, intellectual level, women are at least able to make a courageous emotional commitment. They expose to dangers their motherly love, as in Pelageia's case, or their wifely devotion, as in Paula's case. The sacrifice they make is embodied in their identity as mother and bride, not as woman or individual. It would be difficult to say which of the portraits more completely compromises any notion of women's equality or separate identity. Paula's proud self-image as a wife, rather than companion, is central to her political outlook. At the point where she makes her most independent stand against law and the church, Kianto is particular in referring to her as 'Rouva Frommerus' (Mrs Frommerus). Her identity becomes assimilated by her husband's. He calls them 'two voices crying in the wilderness', he campaigns for universal and equal suffrage, but simultaneously underlines the importance of his individuality: 'I will travel my own road, so as to be freer.'<sup>281</sup> Paula herself has no need of this individualistic identity. Similarly, Pelageia's status by the end of the first half of the novel derives from her own description of herself as 'Pavel Vlasov's mother'.<sup>282</sup> This remains her view of her identity to the very end of the novel, apart from a moment at the beginning of Part II, where she signs herself 'Pelageia Vlasova, widow of a working man'.<sup>283</sup> From the moment she enters fully into revolutionary activity, Gor'kii promotes her by referring to her by her patronymic Nilovna, instead of

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280 *ibid.*, p.74; 'vihkimätöntä liittoa', 'naisen kunnia'.

281 *ibid.*, p.397; 'me olemme kaksi huutavan-ääntä korvessa', 'kuljen omaa latuani, siten on vapaampi.'

282 Gor'kii, *Mat'*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.264; 'мать Павла Власова'.

283 *ibid.*, p.271; 'вдова рабочего человека, Пелагея Власова'.



Pelageia.<sup>284</sup> This indicates not only the 'masculine' quality of her action, but also the submergence of her feminine identity within the cause.

For the most part, Pelageia is a more successful active participant in political developments than Paula. Her public role also enables her to abandon some of the trappings of woman's domesticity. After her son's arrest she moves to town to live with another activist, Nikolai Ivanovich. When she expresses her desire to be useful, she is dismayed at Nikolai's suggestion that she might undertake the housework. Although she does instinctively perform the neglected domestic duties for the period she is staying with Nikolai, she also travels to the countryside to make contact with Rybin over the distribution of a journal for the peasants. Subsequently, she becomes directly involved with the dissemination of revolutionary propaganda. Paula is more physically removed from the action in Kianto's novel. She is excluded from the chapter dealing with the disturbances of 1905, nor does she participate in the political campaigning preceding the elections. For her, marriage also presents a favourable alternative to work, although it should be remembered that the work she gives up was for the church, which the ideology of the novel rejects. Nevertheless, her 'womanliness' is portrayed as a charming homeliness. She is irresistibly drawn to the cares of choosing furniture or clothes in a way that Reino clearly is not. Content with her own domesticity, Paula appreciates Reino's work 'for such a worthy cause' as the coming elections.<sup>285</sup>

On the other hand, it is Paula who has a slightly greater awareness of the traditional iniquities exercised against her as a woman, and not merely in terms of sexual morality in unsanctified wedlock. When she and Reino travel abroad to obtain a marriage licence, they experience difficulty in Denmark because they are of the same faith, which means there is no easy reason for seeking a civil marriage. Paula recognizes that the demand made upon her, rather than her fiancé, to accommodate to a new faith, is the result of her status as a woman. Later, in her argument with the pastor Rynttänen, she wonders aloud 'whether we women even possess souls.'<sup>286</sup> Paula's experiences resulting from her ideological beliefs increase her awareness of her rights as a woman, even if Kianto does not make it clear what benefits

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284 *ibid.*, e.g. p.286 or p.288.

285 Kianto, *Pyhä viha*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.397; 'niin jalon asian vuoksi'.

286 *ibid.*, p.322; 'tokko meillä naisilla edes on sieluja.'



she expects from the equal suffrage for which her husband, but not she, will campaign. Pelageia's political awakening, by contrast, reduces her sense of victimization from male oppression, despite the fact that it is precisely the doctrine of meek acceptance of victimization against which she is rebelling. Her earliest statement:

Your father drank enough for both of you. Didn't I suffer enough at his hands..?<sup>287</sup>

is later over-ridden by the realization that:

He used to beat me as though it wasn't his wife he was beating, but everyone he had a grudge against.<sup>288</sup>

She identifies completely with we 'people from the dark life'.<sup>289</sup>

Pelageia's and Paula's views of their own liberation through the political and social changes they seek do not undermine the established male-female hierarchy or traditional attitudes towards women. The actions of these women are dictated by men. They are subordinated by their roles as mother and wife, identities which in themselves suggest the absence of independence. They also fail to redefine women's role, because the symbolic message of their characterization is rooted in a mystification of the feminine which is solidly founded on pre-conceptions. Kianto's idealization of marriage is analogical to a structure and unit representing the ideal state, in which he creates a paradoxical ideal of woman active in national affairs. She has an open and spirited mind which enables her to adopt a futuristic concept of equality, but possesses the instincts and inclinations which keep her bound to her 'natural' submissiveness to a male protector. Here, Gor'kii, who often tends towards a similar gallantry, manipulates the concept of maternal protectiveness and self-sacrifice. This also creates a paradox in her character development, as she too looks forwards to a new age of equality while at the same time she embodies the most traditional concept of woman's essential function and inner being. Neither author suggests that his heroine's reactions are the product of

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287 Gor'kii, *Mat'*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.158; 'За тебя, сколько надо, отец выпил. И меня он намучил довольно..?'

288 *ibid.*, p.212; 'Бил он меня, точно не жену бьет, а - всех, на кого зло имеет.'

289 *ibid.*, p.282; 'у людей черной жизни'. As Richard Stites points out, the concept of 'the Russian family - merchant, gentry, peasant - as "dark kingdom" would be a major social cliché for generations.' Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, p.35.



environmental influence, but that they spring from fundamental feminine qualities which dictate their social and psychological role.

## 2.5 Conclusion

By a stretch of the imagination he could visualize himself as an emperor, a hero, a prophet, a conqueror, but not as a woman.<sup>290</sup>

So reflects the hero of Pasternak's novel of the Russian revolution, *Doktor Zhivago*. Indeed the business of being a woman was a concept of identity which captured the imagination of the revolutionary and pre-revolutionary generations. As a creation of the 1950s, Iurii Zhivago's particular failure to visualize himself as a woman may be understood as the wisdom of hindsight. Male intellectuals of the revolutionary era seemed on the contrary more inclined to believe that they possessed a great deal of insight into the essence of womanhood. Nonetheless, Zhivago's reflection is representative of the early twentieth century in certain respects: the nature of the female being was a serious subject of deliberation, and the mystification of woman within the revolutionary context could be extreme. The implication of Zhivago's idea is after all that woman is 'supra-real', more remarkable than the adjacent epithets of epic stature which the reader must presume to be masculine identities. Likewise, as growing social unrest led to even deeper preoccupations with the spiritual and political direction of the nation, the portrayal of woman's potential action and loyalties in a national context was often inspired by an imagery of mythical or legendary proportions. The role of women in influencing national and human destinies ranged from figures of treachery to figures of sacrifice. Writers called upon larger-than-life images which culminated in a powerfully eternal view of woman in the image of the Madonna.

As the literary scholar, Maria-Liisa Nevala, has pointed out:

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<sup>290</sup> Boris Pasternak, *Doktor Zhivago*, Moscow, 1989, (1956) p.70; 'При некотором усилии фантазии Юра мог вообразить себя взошедшим на Арарат героем, пророком, победителем, всем, чем угодно, но только не женщиной.' Translation from Boris Pasternak, *Dr Zhivago*, trans. Max Hayward and Manya Harari, New York, 1958.



The attitude towards woman is the real testing ground of many a radical reformist. It provides an uncompromising picture of the limits of their rebelliousness.<sup>291</sup>

Kianto and Gor'kii were perhaps the most politically radical, established authors of their day, but their portraits of women fall far short of their revolutionary vision. The characterization of Paula and Pelageia suffers from the same difficulties as feminist ideology did in the debate over the correct channel of women's emancipation. In attempting to discover the inner nature of the female being, theories became entangled with a wealth of pre-conceptions which were considered to be inherent, rather than acquired or even fallacious, qualities of womanhood. In literature the search for a familiar symbolism compromised the portrayal of the new woman. Paula and Pelageia demonstrate that traditional values could impose themselves on ideas about women under almost any circumstances. Pelageia is working-class, middle-aged, widowed, a mother, active outside the home, and a loyal propagandist for the revolution. Paula is educated, young, newly-wed, happy with home life, and a loyal companion in the national resistance. Neither woman succeeds in liberating herself from the inevitable constraints of a mystification of femininity.

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291 Maria-Liisa Nevala, *Ilmari Kianto: anarkisti ja ihmisyyden puolustaja*, Helsinki, 1986, p.258; 'Suhtautuminen naiseen on monen radikaalin uudistajan varsinainen koetinkivi. Se paljastaa lahjomattomasti ne rajat, joissa kumouksellisuus liikkuu.'



## CHAPTER THREE

### 3 VOICE (I): Identity in Silence

In a period of conscious transition, writers fastened on the theme of woman's active participation in social and political life as a positive and vital force of renewal in the nation. The portrayal of politically active women in the literature of the pre-revolutionary generations reflected the perimeters of woman's role in the shaping of the future. With her identity inexorably determined by her function as wife and mother, woman remained man's dependent help-mate in the revolutionary partnership. Anarchistic programmes preserved the sanctity of the family unit, which proved an uncontestable model for the ideal state. Views on social and moral issues remained rooted in the paternalistic attitudes of a privileged and ruling gender and class. Literary models of woman's contribution to political or intellectual life reinforced, rather than challenged, the most simplistic prejudices about woman's nature and capabilities. By using emotively drawn imagery of mythical proportions to glorify virginity on the one hand and motherhood on the other, writers only helped to make the cult of woman's self-effacing modesty and sacrifice a more irrefutable ideal.

An ideal founded on personal disinterest could hardly begin to serve woman's interests. From writers' commentary on the woman question to their portraits of nationally loyal womanhood, the key to the politicization of women and feminism is obscured. Writers ignored woman's realization of the need to take control over her own destiny on her own behalf. This was an inevitable consequence of adhering to established concepts of an intrinsically feminine motivation. While writers went to substantial lengths to reject traditional assumptions of woman's inherent inferiority, they placed the emphasis on woman's apparently superior capacity for intuitive goodness and self-sacrifice. They challenged notions of woman's weakness or passivity with pictures of woman's resilience and readiness to act. But the portrayal of active woman was not necessarily a picture of emancipated woman.



Absent from the image of the 'new woman' is the expression of an independent consciousness which would allow the development of separate identity. It is not simply that the feminist viewpoint was not articulated by writers, but that the mystification of the feminine being was a process which effectively silenced woman's voice.

### 3.1 Political Voice

#### 3.1.1 The Vote

As Richard Evans indicates in his study of international feminism, the final politicization of women's movements stemmed from women's recognition that the social, economic and moral reforms they sought could not be achieved without adequate representation. The vote became an issue as the limited effectiveness of woman's organizations made women aware of the need to wield political power. In Finland and Russia, the focus on woman's suffrage took place at a relatively late stage in the development of feminism. The nature of autocratic rule excluded the question of extended civil rights from the arena of debate. Women's initial reaction to the failure to introduce social improvements through legal channels was to draw closer to the movements of government resistance. In doing so they abandoned, suppressed or clung patiently to their feminist priorities. It was not until the stability of the imperial government was undermined by the general unrest arising from Russia's war with Japan and the events of the 1905 revolution that the vote established itself as a crucial aspect of the woman question.

In Finland, female suffrage had been included in the manifesto of the Social Democratic Party from its inception in 1899, but it was only in 1904 that it acquired significance.<sup>292</sup> Universal and equal suffrage was successfully incorporated in the liberal constitution granted in 1906. The radical wing of Russian feminism also emerged at this time, as the disruption caused by uprisings and strikes forced freer political activity. However, unlike their Finnish counterparts, Russian women won no shared constitutional freedom, no extension of even limited suffrage. This only served to aggravate their sense of being deprived of their civil rights. The All Russian Union of Equal Rights for Women was founded, demanding national representation based on universal

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292 Evans, *op.cit.*, p.88.



suffrage.<sup>293</sup> Moreover, between 1905 and 1917, although the vote was never won, four feminist parties struggled in the political arena.<sup>294</sup>

Female suffrage was an important issue at a critical time in the political development of Finland and Russia. The specific question of the female vote made almost no impact on writers. A unique European historical achievement for Finland, a serious political controversy in Russia, the female vote was nevertheless quickly forgotten. Whether for reasons of censorship or lack of creative appeal, female suffrage was a subject reserved for feminist journals, where developments in Europe and America were eagerly recorded. After 1906, Russian feminists referred to Finland as a model example of what women could achieve, but otherwise the granting of suffrage provoked little comment in intellectual circles in either Finland or Russia. In Russia, it continued to be seen as a distracting motif in the goal of general social progress, much as Tolstoi had expressed in *Kreitserova sonata*:

Women's lack of rights has nothing to do with them not being allowed to vote or be judges - those matters don't constitute any sort of right.<sup>295</sup>

Such rights naturally did not appear so burdensome to those who were denied them.

In Finland, women's newly acquired status is briefly recorded in literature. Eino Leino remarks on the event in his satirical novel *Tuomas Witikka* (1906), though only to deride it. The novel paints an ironic picture of all political factions. Leino's criticism mainly addresses the various parties' uncompromising, antagonistic stance which threatened divisiveness at a time which called for national unity. Woman's suffrage is one of the causes advanced by the eager, young Social Democrat, Aavasaksa and his disciple Emmi, who later becomes Aavasaksa's wife. By the end of the novel the couple are campaigning for the vote for children.<sup>296</sup> The parallel is clearly intentional. Women are far too immature to exercise their right to vote (the title hero's mother never uses hers). This does not mean that they are innocent, as

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293 *ibid.*, p.121.

294 Richard Stites, 'Women and the Revolutionary Process in Russia' in Bridenthall et al., eds, *op.cit.*, p.454.

295 Tolstoi, *Kreitserova sonata*, in *op.cit.*, Vol 12, p.142; 'Не в том отсутствие прав женщины, что она не может вотировать или быть судьей - заниматься этими делами не составляет никаких прав.'

296 Leino, *Tuomas Witikka*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.9, p.269.



children are. In Emmi's view women are also too corrupt to hold power.<sup>297</sup>

Woman exercising her newly obtained right alongside man is also portrayed in Ilmari Kianto's novel *Punainen viiva*.<sup>298</sup> In this novel, cynical about the new government's ability to serve the interests of Finland's rural population, the vote for men as for women in the countryside was an empty victory. An interesting aspect of the vote in *Punainen viiva* is its reflection of the contradictions faced by women as they confront social progress. Riika, a peasant woman, is catapulted into the twentieth century by the constitutional reform of which she, like her husband, is wholly ignorant. The novel illustrates the difficulties of adapting to change. The author expresses a certain nostalgia for tradition and the simple ways of the people. Tradition, in the romantic sense of an unspoiled land and people, characterized much of the radical writing of the turn of the century. This often presents a peculiar dichotomy in the status of women. Unlike the emancipation of slaves or the working classes, women's emancipation does not presuppose independence from the inbuilt hierarchy of custom. In *Punainen viiva*:

The man skied ahead, the old girl behind, as custom would have it. Actually on even terrain Riika managed to ski alongside him, but Topi did not really approve of his wife's efforts.<sup>299</sup>

For practical reasons the heaviest party skis ahead in order to create the most even tracks, but it is the charm of rural custom that captures the author's imagination.<sup>300</sup> Kianto romanticizes traditional roles. He evidently sees no contradiction in women participating as equal, enfranchised members of the community, and skiing a respectful distance behind their husbands to the polling stations.

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297 *ibid.*, p.271.

298 Kianto, *Punainen viiva*, in *Valitut teokset*, Vol.3, p.134.

299 *ibid.*, p.126; 'Mies hiihteli edellä, eukko takana, kuten kansan tapa sen vaati. Tosin tuppautui Riika tasaisilla maisemilla ihan rinnalle liukumaan, mutta ei Topi sitä vaimoihmisen ponnistusta oikein suvainnut.'

300 The matter of who skis ahead is likely to have been determined by status rather than practical purposes. A. Nieminen remarks that in Finnish peasant culture women usually walked a certain distance behind their husbands and did not address them by their Christian name. A. Nieminen, *op.cit.*, p.68.



### 3.1.2 The Campaign for Equality

As a self-interested element of woman's emancipation, the vote is dismissed. Separate political voice is apparently superfluous to women. Any aspiration to equality which bears too bold a hint of separate action is subject to the same derision. The chief target for writers' criticism is the ostensible feminist. As an ideology and movement, feminism itself attracted little comment from writers. While they promoted universal equality on one hand, they seemed to perceive feminism as a misguided deviation from the central thrust of progressive ideology. In Russia, the feminist contrasted unfavourably with the dedicated revolutionary. In Kuprin's *Reka Zhizni* the hero mentions his disgust at:

radical lady doctors who hastily repeat bits out of manifestos, but whose souls are cold, cruel and flat, like marble slabs.<sup>301</sup>

The medical profession was the main occupation chosen by Russian women with a feminist consciousness, while many of those who embraced revolutionary activity were former medical students who never completed their studies.

There was an uncomfortable ambivalence in women's relationship to their political position, in that the recognition they received stemmed, in effect, from an absence of recognition. Equality sat uneasily with unity. Women knew that it was only through representation of their particular interests that they could create the necessary foundations for equality. Yet they felt it wrong to isolate the woman question from the general question of human liberty. Establishing a theory of unity by virtue of universally denied political power was an attempt to resolve unity with equality. It was in this form that writers offered a positive image of woman's political identity.

Representation was discussed as an issue which united men and women because of shared political voicelessness, rather than as a separate matter related to the woman question. The limited rights of franchise granted to men were not seen as an impressive advantage so long as the majority of men remained as unrepresented as all women, and the state mechanism hindered reforms to the legal system. In

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<sup>301</sup> Kuprin, *Reka zhizni*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.72; 'радикальных женщин-врачей, твердящих впопыхах куски из прокламаций, но с душой холодной и плоской, как мраморная доска.'



Finland, women's participation was encouraged in journals on the grounds that a nation so small was obliged to exploit every one of its resources.<sup>302</sup> Similar exhortations were expressed in literature on many occasions where 'women too' (*naisetkin*) are urged to act, particularly in connection with the theme of elections. In Aho's collection, *Katajainen kansani* the piece entitled *Juhlavaatteet* (1901, 'Sunday best') deals with the signing of petitions. Aho emphasizes that:

the matter is such that it concerns every Finnish citizen, every woman as well as every man.<sup>303</sup>

*Kansa kapinassa* (1899, 'A nation in revolt'), in the same collection, also specifically appeals to 'young and old, men and women' to defend their native land from the threat of ignorance.<sup>304</sup>

Aho's view of national duty asserts that every individual effort is essential. Yet despite his assertion, women are only represented in these invocations to 'unite'. The three stories in *Katajainen kansani* which portray women play down the theme of national debate, and highlight personal, philanthropic or social themes. There remains an unspoken divide between the existence of the female vote and its relevance to changes in the social structure. While repeated appeals are made for women's recognition of their rights and responsibilities, the world itself remains a masculine domain. Political debate and social theory abound in male terms. Aho's short novel *Maailman murjoma* (1893, 'Life's casualty') demonstrates how the structures of class and finance, as well as the transition to the modern world, function as a male conflict for the author. The protagonist, a backward, solitary farm worker considers:

all his enemies, all his oppressors and tormentors: the engineers, the local police chief, the landlord, Tahvo, the workmen, the locomotive and its drivers, and everyone else who was in league against him.<sup>305</sup>

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302 See e.g. B.F. Godenhjelm, 'Naissivistys ja nais-oppinot I' (*Valvoja*, 3, 1883, p.104), who expresses the idea that Finland needs to cultivate every possible intellect in contrast to large nations where the fruits of genius can be allowed to rise from the dust on their own. In such a small nation 'even woman' (*naisenkin*) must participate in the national cause.

303 Aho, *Juhlavaatteet*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.6, p.50; 'asia on semmoinen, että se koskee jokaista Suomen kansalaista, miestä niin kuin naistakin.'

304 Aho, *Kansa kapinassa*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.6, p.71; 'vanhat ja nuoret, miehet ja naiset'.

305 Aho, *Maailman murjoma*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.3, p.337; 'kaikki vihamiehensä, kaikki vainoojansa ja kiusanhenkensä: insinöörit, vallesmannin, isännän, Tahvon, työmiehet, veturin ja sen kuljettajat, ja kaikki muut, jotka ovat liitossa häntä vastaan.'



Both the capitalist exploiter and the naïve farmer, Junnu, belong to a uniquely male environment.<sup>306</sup>

Aho's social description reflects a common pattern. It combines the endorsement of female participation with an absence of female representation. This state of affairs restricts woman's political expression, even when she apparently adopts the 'correct' ideology. In Kianto's *Pyhä viha*, Paula Winterberg was able to defend her position because she expressed herself in terms of her devoted loyalty to her husband's will. She contrasts favourably with another female champion of civil marriage and opponent of the church in Kianto's work. His collection of short stories, *Pikku syntejä* (1909, 'Minor sins'), includes a portrait of a progressive woman, *Vapaamielinen nainen* ('The free-thinking woman'). Unlike Paula, she does not follow her husband, but makes her own moral judgements. She takes pride in being the first woman in Finland to enter voluntarily into unsanctified wedlock. Kianto ridicules her specifically for her suggestion of independent conviction. She is not imbued with an exceptional freedom of intellect, as Reino is in *Pyhä viha* with his 'super-human' level of development, which enables him to accept free love. She is characterized by vanity and affectation, indicating both her low level of intelligence and her basic immodesty. Kianto further disparages his free-thinking woman by making her state that she does not object to the ceremony of church weddings, which she considers beautiful despite her rejection of church dogma. This is a political incongruity which, according to the author, defeats her whole argument. By contrast Reino's, and indeed Kianto's own fondness for the ritualistic imagery of ancient traditions is to be taken as a serious expression of aesthetic sensitivity. Kianto's portrait is a parody of women's rights campaigners. It describes the limitations placed by the author on woman's personal and political expression.<sup>307</sup> It is revealing, though perhaps not surprising, to note that in one description of an encounter with politically active Russian students recorded in his memoirs, the conversation Kianto recalls with one of the

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306 The role of women in dramatic conflict in Aho is reserved for themes of female sexuality, as in *Juha* (1911), and even then they become objectified instruments in male tensions.

307 The story *Hän ei koskaan juorunnut* ('She never gossiped'), in the same collection, also reveals Kianto's view of the substance of woman's conversation. The character referred to in the title does nothing else than gossip.



women present concerns his Christmas holidays, while his ensuing discussion with the men concerns the issue of Finnish independence.<sup>308</sup>

Aho and Kianto exemplify a dichotomy in attitude common among many male writers of their day in Finland. They maintain their attitude of *naisetkin* in the more didactic passages of their call for national unity, while retaining a traditional view of woman's role in relation to man. A defining feature of this construct is woman's lack of independent expression, whether specifically feminist or generally progressive. Woman's traditional silence is not considered incompatible with woman's emancipation. The feminine ideal described by Olavi Kalm in Aho's *Papin rouva* is:

quiet, modest, discreet, nonetheless at the same time firm of character and independent.<sup>309</sup>

Woman's role in political life is equally ambivalent in Russian literature. The general endorsement of improvements in woman's sphere did not encompass any overt, feminist struggle for equality. The demand for equality was interpreted as an ill-advised desire on the part of fanatic women to become identical with men. For the most part it was discredited by a deft process of asserting woman's existing equality, and even her superiority. Indeed, woman's public and political anonymity is a feature of this equality which must be preserved at all costs. This was the basis of Tolstoi's position on the woman question, expressed in *Kreitserova sonata*, *Voskresenie*, and, perhaps most lucidly, in his famous commentary of 1906 on Chekhov's story *Dushechka*. He writes:

We could get on without women doctors, women telegraph clerks, women lawyers, women scientists, women writers, but life would be a sorry affair without mothers, helpers, friends, comforters, who love in men the best in them, and imperceptibly instil, evoke and support it.<sup>310</sup>

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308 Kianto, *Moskovan maisteri*, p.71.

309 Aho, *Papin rouva*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.222; 'hiljainen, vaatimaton, hieno, samalla kuitenkin lujaluontoinen ja itsenäinen'. Kalm further states that she need not be well-read, and insists that she must not have short hair or be too brisk, all details frequently included in the stereotype of the feminist.

310 Tolstoi, *Posleslovie k rasskazu Chekhova "Dushechka"*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.15, p.317; 'Без женщин-врачей, телеграфисток, адвокатов, ученых, сочинительниц мы обойдемся, но без матерей, помощниц, подруг, утешительниц, любящих в мужчине все то лучшее, что есть в нем и незаметным внушением вызывающих и поддерживающих в нем все это лучшее, - без таких женщин плохо было бы жить на свете.' Translation of this and the



For Tolstoi, women's legitimate wish to improve themselves in no way presupposes the recognition of their subjective voice. The key word for him is 'imperceptibly'. Without the female type he describes:

there would have been no wives of the Dekabrists in Siberia,(...) there would not have been those thousands and thousands of unknown women - the best of all, as the unknown always are - the comforters of the drunken, the weak, and the dissolute, who, more than any, need the comfort of love.<sup>311</sup>

Tolstoi's glorification of woman's special capacity for selfless love, which distinguishes her from man,<sup>312</sup> idealizes the very suppression of her self-expression. It is the 'unknown' woman who is rewarded with a place in history.

The masculinist environment creates its own definitions of woman's political expression. Kuprin's novel *Iama* portrays certain types of active woman. The less their actions relate to women in particular, the more positive their contribution to society. The feminist philanthropist and the dedicated revolutionary exist at opposite poles. In between lies the liberal woman of the world. Philanthropists are shown to be cut off from the women they claim to represent. Kuprin underlines this by using precisely one of those women as the mouthpiece for his criticism. The prostitute Zhenia, also the most important female figure in the novel, scorns the philanthropist's visit to the brothel:

So this old spinster came and mumbled something in a foreign language, all the time pointing up at the heavens, and then handed out five-copeck editions of the Gospel and left.<sup>313</sup>

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subsequent quotation from 'Tolstoy's Criticism on the Darling' in Chekhov, *The Darling and Other Stories*, trans. Constance Garnett, New York, 1984 (1916).

311 *ibid.*, p.317; 'не было бы на каторге жен декабристов,(...) не было бы тысяч и тысяч безызвестных, самых лучших, как все безвестное, женщин, утешительниц пьяных, слабых, развратных людей, тех, для которых нужнее, чем кому-нибудь, утешения любви.'

312 *ibid.*, p.317; the author makes specific reference to men's inability to perform the 'task of love, the task of giving oneself up totally to the object of one's love' (дела любви, дела полного отдания себя тому, кого любишь), which women perform so well and so naturally.

313 Kuprin, *Iama*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.5, pp.101-02; 'Ну и приехала эта гримза. Лоташила-лоташила что-то по инностранному все рукой на небо показывала, а потом раздала нам всем по пятакковому евангелию и уехала.'



The fact that she was an Englishwoman, who spoke no Russian, further illustrates her inability to offer adequate representation. In contrast, a 'decadent' Russian singer, who has an open mind about male habits, visits the brothel as part of an evening's adventure.<sup>314</sup> She is shown to be far more capable of understanding the meaning of a life of prostitution. Hints are made at her own not so unsullied past. Significantly, it is she who wins the affection of the proud and indifferent Zhenia.

Although she is 'one of the boys', the singer is herself a career woman and expresses solidarity with the prostitutes. Kuprin's truly positive example of woman's political participation denies any element of a female bias to her expression however. This is to be found in the romantic figure of the mysterious Magda, who comes to work in the brothel for a brief period.<sup>315</sup> As she stands out from the usual class of prostitute, she explains at first that she is an author seeking 'vérité'. Only after her disappearance is it revealed that she was a revolutionary, spreading the word to her clients. The underground nature of her work implies its inevitable secrecy, but it cannot escape the reader that the propaganda she disseminates reaches the male clients, but not the female inmates, of the brothel. Her revolutionary work is evidently irrelevant to these women. Magda's role is unequivocally that of a tool in the affairs of men. Her function of prostitute places the political struggle on a uniquely masculine battlefield. It is not just that the brothel is male territory (prostitutes, with no legal rights, have no subjective legal identity), Kuprin goes even further by equating prostitution with war. Magda's subversive activities can be equated with military heroism.

The prostitute is often one of the disadvantaged 'masses', whose needs are championed by the progressively minded. Gor'kii includes the image of the prostitute alongside those of the beggar and the cab driver in his piece *Tovarishch* (1909, 'Comrade'). These three types are representatives of a whole class of people alienated by the nature of their professions. In the move towards the coming era of equality, they are to

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314 Kuprin, *ibid.*, p.152.

315 The scene with Magda appears in Chap.5 of *Iama*, omitted from the 1958 edition of Kuprin's collected works as well as from most other editions of the novel. It is included in the English translation entitled *Yama: The Pit* by Bernard Guilbert Guerney, London, 1924. This edition also includes a foreword by Kuprin, in which he states that this is the most complete and accurate version of the work 'as it was originally conceived.' (p.xxiv)



be united by the word 'comrade'. This sense of unity is also the message behind the range of social types in *Mat'*. All sections of society are represented in the novel. At the same time, it is this form of all-inclusive equality which denies Pelageia any independent political expression, either as a woman or as an activist.

Gor'kii's play *Vragi* demonstrates how women's political expression, assimilated in the male struggle, exists merely as an echo. The author contrasts several women's ideological viewpoint, without allowing them to enter the political debate. The female protagonists are associated with definite factions, as are their male counterparts. As so many of Gor'kii's female characters, they are chiefly motivated by instinct. Their political voice becomes an emotional parallel to male reason. The candid, idealistic Nadia, for example, is an emotional reflection of the worker Grekov, a frank and forthright strike leader. Nadia relates an incident in which Grekov intervenes to rescue her and her sister-in-law, Cleopatra, from the attentions of a group of drunken men. She is repeatedly chastised for telling her story as if it were an exciting adventure, to which she replies:

If it were all the way you tell it - everybody would die of boredom.<sup>316</sup>

Nadia's determination to record her version of the incident is a sign of her spirited youthfulness, but it does not indicate an assertion of herself. Her words herald the shock that Grekov's words will have on the other members of Nadia's bourgeois family. It is his dialogue which bears the sound of independence. Even more than his refusal of their money, his refusal to explain himself liberates him from the family's traditional expectation of servility in the working man. It is this which leads Cleopatra to the conclusion that he is a socialist. Nadia, by contrast, is simply a wild and irresponsible young girl.

Conservative and liberal politics have male spokesmen in the play. In the women, these values are represented through concepts of morality, with their discussion centering on definitions of 'decency' (*приличность*). Tatiana's sensuality and Cleopatra's unfaithfulness project a 'good' and 'bad' sexual presence which is intended to parallel their political sympathies. If women find expression at all, it can only

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316 Gor'kii, *Vragi*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.6, p.399; 'Если бы все было, как вы рассказываете...все умерли бы со скуки!'



have a negative influence. Among working-class women, the incomprehending self-interest of workers' wives emasculates the strike:

Once the factory is closed, the women will swing into action...They'll cry, and on those intoxicated with dreams women's tears act like smelling salts - they sober them up!<sup>317</sup>

The dangers of women meddling in political debate are most forcefully evoked in the character of the grasping, unintelligent Polina. Narrow-minded and selfish, Polina is a parody of the ignorant woman with pretensions to intellectualism. Moreover, Nadia's reproach of Polina's impolite reception of Grekov underlines the domestic limits of woman's political expression:

And you, auntie, you who have lived abroad and talk about politics! Not to have asked a man to sit down! Not to have offered him a cup of tea!<sup>318</sup>

### 3.1.3 Woman's Voice of Leadership

While women are accepted in the political struggle by virtue of their intuitive loyalties, or in vague exhortations for unity, they find little individual expression. Feminist expression is discredited, other progressive political expression manifests itself as an echo of male politics or as a spiritual outburst over which women have no subjective control. Woman's voice is a medium for ideological expression. In this form, it allows her the potential for limited leadership, in the manner of Pelageia in Gor'kii's *Mat'* and Paula in Kianto's *Pyhä viha*. The mediating aspect of woman's voice is used to describe independent female conviction. This is the feature which characterizes female prophets. In her story *Lasnamäen valkea laiva* (1913, *The White Ship*, 1924), Kallas casts Maie, a young mother, in the role of religious revivalist. Her ecstatic speeches encourage many others to follow her in her search for the white ship which will carry them to a better world. Likewise in Gippius' story *Legenda* (1896, 'Legend') the heroine

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317 *ibid.*, p.392; 'Когда мы закроем завод, в дело вступят женщины...Они будут плакать, а слезы женщин действуют на людей, опьяненных мечтами, как нашатырный спирт, - они отрезвляют!'

318 *ibid.*, p.401; 'А вы, тетя, вы!.. Еще на границей жили, о политике говорите!.. Не пригласить человека сесть, не дать ему чашку чая!.'



Manichka, inspired by a speech given by a young, male progressive intellectual, sets off to travel the country and preach the need for freedom.

Beyond the intuitive nature of their convictions, both Maie and Manichka achieve some degree of independent motivation. Maie abandons all memory of her husband and children in her role as seeker, and Manichka chooses her path:

Not for the sake of God, but for myself. And also for the sake of freedom.<sup>319</sup>

The step towards independence from men or male values in these stories nevertheless fails to fulfil an assertion of the self. The characters establish their personal expression on the basis of the denial of their beings. Maie does not remember her former life. She is, moreover, only given recognition in her moments of ecstatic trance, which involves the displacement of the self. Manichka's philosophy is equally self-negating. She states: 'I do not fear anything because I do not want anything.'<sup>320</sup>

Both seekers present an illogical extreme of freedom which cannot reconcile itself to real life. Maie loses her faith and returns to her former existence, while Manichka's fate is death.

Woman's ideological expression is characterized by a self-effacement which permeates every facet of the portrayal of her political activity. Those rare portraits of philanthropists, teachers, doctors, students or other women with a feminist consciousness at the root of their motivation show them to be divorced from reality and from their own womanhood. One portrait which should be mentioned as the notable exception to this rule is that of a woman lawyer in L. Onerva's story *Kiusaus* (1915, 'Temptation'). The story conveys the emotional life of its protagonist, the reasoned motivation behind her life of celibacy, and the political beliefs which led to her choice of career. Liina Syvärin talks of the importance of her work on both a social and a personal level. She was first prompted to acquire an education which would provide her with employment precisely because of:

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319 Gippius, *Legenda*, in *Novye Liudi*, St Petersburg, 1896, p.278; 'Не для Бога. Я для себя. И еще для свободы.'

320 Gippius, *ibid.*, p.276; 'А я ничего не боюсь, потому что я ничего не хочу.'



woman's customary helplessness and dependence, her position of enslavement in society.<sup>321</sup>

She describes the social and economic injustices that women face. She even raises the issue of the forms of address of *neiti* (Miss) and *rouva* (Mrs) as a genuine affront to women's civil dignity. As the tale unfolds, the reader learns of her unfulfilled, but reciprocated love for a married man. The author uses this motif to enhance the character's completeness as a person. Liina Syvärin's politics do not presuppose her emotional and sexual sterility, as is so often the case in portraits of feminists. The warmth in her account of her romantic attachment, devoid of any bitterness of disappointment, prevents her statement that:

An intelligent person has better things to do than to mourn over the fact that she never married,<sup>322</sup>

from sounding like the consolation of an ageing spinster.

L. Onerva's story gives expression to a different model of the 'new woman', to the true pioneer of equality. In Liina Syvärin, private and public spheres find a balance. Her politics are articulate and include a keen consciousness of woman's position. The characterization is also an attempt to reject the preconceptions of feminism and womanhood as mutually exclusive. This picture of woman at the turn of the century is as rare as the character herself is extraordinary among her contemporaries. Indeed, the author emphasizes that Liina Syvärin is an exceptional woman.

L. Onerva hints that the protagonist of *Kiusaus* is drawn from life. It can be contrasted with another portrait known to have been taken from life, which demonstrates the extent to which stereotypes are easily superimposed on real 'heroines'. Gippius' novel *Roman Tsarevich*, includes a portrait of an Estonian revolutionary Meta Vein'. The novel contains much description of the life of Russian émigrés in France, and Meta Vein' is known to have been modelled on the populist Vera Figner, whom Gippius had met in Paris.<sup>323</sup> Figner was originally

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321 L. Onerva, *Kiusaus*, in *Vangittuja sieluja*, Helsinki, 1915, p.130; 'naisen tavanmukainen avuttomuus ja riippuvaisuus ja hänen yhteiskunnallisesti orjuutettu asemansa'.

322 *ibid.*, p.141, 'on siis järkevällä ihmisellä muutakin tekemistä kuin surra sitä, että ei ole päässyt rouvaksi.'

323 Temira Pachmuss, 'Introduction' in Z.N. Gippius, *Chortova kukla / Roman Tsarevich*, Reprint of the Moscow editions of 1911 and 1913, Munich, 1972, p.xiii.



spurred by her feminist consciousness to pursue medical studies in Zürich when university courses were not open to women in Russia. After much careful deliberation, she eventually abandoned her studies to engage fully in the revolutionary movement.<sup>324</sup> Like Figner, in the novel *Meta Vein'* is sentenced to imprisonment in Siberia by the Russian court. Other than this however, it is difficult to perceive how Gippius intended this 'simple young girl, an Estonian from the countryside'<sup>325</sup> as a reflection of Vera Figner, or even as an individualistic image of revolutionary woman. When Gippius met Figner she was already a figure of legendary proportions. Gippius' own recollections of the generation of revolutionary terrorists emphasize the immortalized state in which they were held by both the younger émigrés and by the local population in Paris.<sup>326</sup> *Meta Vein'* is characterized by features which apply to almost all Gippius' portraits of socially conscious women. Similar types can be found in her play *Zelënoe kol'tso*, elsewhere in *Roman Tsarevich*, and the novel of which it is a sequel, *Chortova Kukla*. Meta's 'serious' political involvement does not detract from her manner of childish enthusiasm and childish innocence.<sup>327</sup> Her articulation of her experiences is halted by confusion, hesitation and silence.

### 3.2 Soundless Voice, Unheard Voice.

It is absence of voice which distinguishes active women from their male counterparts in Finnish and Russian literature. Politically conscious women are driven by passionate conviction and an instinct for justice. They do not formulate or articulate their political views in the way men do, in countless passages of argumentative dialogue, general debate or internal monologue. If women's experience is represented in the political forum, it is done through the mouths of men and manipulated for the sake of the cause. There is a thematic neglect of woman's own experience in the vast body of literature. Woman's own political expression - be it feminist or of any other political persuasion - is missing. Both these factors are related to one of the most dominant

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324 Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, p.84.

325 Gippius, *Roman Tsarevich*, St Petersburg, 1913, p.184, 'простая девушка, естка, из деревни.'

326 Z. Gippius-Merezhkovskaia, *Dmitrii Merezhkovskii*, Paris, 1951, p.169.

327 Gippius, *Roman Tsarevich*, pp.183-85.



features of female portraits in literature: woman's intrinsic gift for silence.

It is important to remember that the turn of the century was a time when women, struggling for political representation, were fighting to be heard. As a central motif in this period's literary characterization of women, silence becomes a striking metaphor. At its most straightforward, woman's silence reflects traditional concepts of woman's place. Countless heroines stifle their own voice or have their voice directly suppressed as a result of parental intolerance, social norms, male oppression or ignorance of their own needs and rights. Examples of this can be found in the work of all writers who portray women in social or political situations.

The significance of silence in women's lives is more far-reaching than this however. It lies not only in the fact that it is a widespread motif, but also in the ambivalent relationship women seem to have towards silence. Although on a superficial level it may indeed mark an internal frustration, grief or dissatisfaction, at a deeper level it also appears as a normal condition for women. This is particularly the case in male interpretations. In the work of women writers, silence is more often an external oppression which heightens women's consciousness of the need for self-expression, independence, and, at least as a temporary measure, separatism.

### 3.2.1 Silent Rebellion

One of the authors most sensitive to the existence of woman's silence as an aspect of human dialogue is the Russian writer Leonid Andreev. Andreev explored themes of subjectivism and solitude in his work, within which silence plays an important part. It is an isolatory and introspective phenomenon which influences human behaviour. In his short stories and plays, Andreev relies extensively on silence as a defining motif of his female characters. It is a silence which has consequences for the dialogue. For Andreev, silence is woman's unique form of expression. It differs dramatically from male experience.

In many instances the absence of woman's voice in Andreev's work is no more than a predictable condition of certain situations. As in the work of many other authors, women are unable to penetrate the intellectual debate. Such is the case with Tatiana's exclusion from the



conversation conducted between the two male protagonists in Act 3 of Andreev's play *Mysl'* (1915, 'Thought').<sup>328</sup> The exchange concerns the possible existence of a super-human 'thought' or idea, also the central theme of the play. The conversation takes place between the scientist Kherzhentsev, who expresses the theory, and Aleksei Savelov, Tatiana's husband, while Tatiana herself is gradually relegated to the children's nursery. A similar pattern occurs in Andreev's play *Ekaterina Ivanovna* (1912, *Katerina*, 1923); when theory of art is discussed in the final act by the male protagonists, the two women present are silent onlookers.

In both plays, Andreev displays acute sensitivity to the psychological stress women experience at being denied expression by virtue of male force. Tatiana tries to persuade her husband that Kherzhentsev is dangerous (which she senses, of course, intuitively). Her attempts are limited to repeated cries of her husband's name, which are interrupted. Tatiana's pleas of 'Alësha...' can be compared with Ekaterina Ivanovna's frequent pleas of 'let me go...' (*пусти...*). This cry represents Ekaterina Ivanovna's defeated efforts to interrupt her husband as he holds her forcibly in his grasp. In both cases the heroine's failure to express herself stems from the fact that the man controls both the situation in general and her actions in particular.

As women are denied the ability to control events, the collusion of men in the process is apparent. Male conflict in Andreev's work possesses the bonding quality that is popularly associated with the duel as a sport: the equal partnership of fair enemies. It is a battle of wits or love, in which the object of the conflict unites the contestants, invariably to the exclusion of women. Before Tatiana is completely silenced by the theoretical fencing between the two men, she tries to separate them because she fears for her husband's safety. Far from succeeding, it is she who is sent from the room by her husband. Immediately before he does this, Savelov makes several references to the times when he and Kherzhentsev were students together, before he had met Tatiana, emphasizing the stronger relationship between the two men. In *Ekaterina Ivanovna*, various pairs of men, and eventually all the men, are united by firm social bonds which form a contrast to the title heroine's increasing isolation. She fails to assert her version of the

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328 The subject of the play was first used for a short story by the same name of 1902, written in the form of a diary. The dramatized version is considered here because of this investigation's concern with dialogue.



drama of infidelity, which provides the thread of the action in the play. It is a conspiracy of masculine interests, and masculine definitions of events, which lead her to self-destruction.

Andreev is sensitive to the sheer force of a male conspiracy which annihilates woman's presence by refusing to acknowledge her version of life's experience. This is not however a tendentious line in his work. If it is an accurate reflection of reality, it is also coincidental. He does not suggest that male bonding itself, which requires a female victim to seal it, is an element which destroys human relationships and individual personalities. In both *Mysl'* and *Ekaterina Ivanovna* the target of his criticism is man's divorce from truth in favour of false reality. Kherzhentsev is cut off from life by his faith in pure theory. Savelov and his colleagues are cut off from humanity by their immersion in cultivated society. Women appear as victims not so much because they are manipulated by men, but because they represent objectified facets of the 'living life' with which the men around them fail to interact. Woman's own subjective identity is not represented. The choice between natural life and artificial reality is not a female conflict in Andreev's work.

Man's and woman's different relationship to the universe in Andreev's work stems once again from a mystification of feminine qualities. Andreev's vision of woman places her on a supra-real plane. Just as Gor'kii and Tolstoi bestow on woman an absolute identity in motherhood, Andreev sees woman as a total embodiment of intuitive forces. Woman's intuitive superiority places her in effortless contact with a greater universality which Andreev's male protagonists can only struggle to achieve. For Andreev, this instinct for the universal means that women do not possess or require expression in ordinary terms. Andreev's female protagonists are often given oral identity through music. This is particularly true of figures more closely associated with the force of political revolution or of rebellion in general. It is in his play *K zvezdam* (1905-06, *To the Stars*, 1921) that music is fused most completely with woman's role in a political context. The revolutionary Marusia, whose dialogue is dominated by song, is given voice as the sound of turmoil in the play. In Act 2, her arrival is announced because: 'She awakened the whole house with her singing.'<sup>329</sup> When she enters

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329 Leonid Andreev, *K zvezdam*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, St Petersburg & Moscow, 1911-3, Vol.6, p.46; 'Весь дом пеньем разбудила.'



she does so singing and throughout the play she continues to break into song.

In *K zvezdam*, unusually for Andreev, both man and woman are in touch with true life, which allows for comparison. Together with Marusia, Ternovskii is guided by universal forces. Ternovskii is an astronomer and the father of Marusia's fiancé who has been arrested during the revolution. Ternovskii does not participate in revolutionary activity, distancing himself from the events of the day in the tower of his observatory. Marusia by contrast is at ground level, devoted to the cause, as well as to her fiancé Nikolai. Ternovskii's and Marusia's different approaches to the contemporary drama has been interpreted as a difference not in the nature of their vision, but in its breadth.<sup>330</sup> Gor'kii described Ternovskii as:

a man living the life of the whole universe amid impoverished, grey, everyday life.<sup>331</sup>

This is symbolized by his scientific preoccupation with the stars. Marusia, on the other hand rejects Ternovskii's solitary concentration on science because she is involved with human suffering. There is, however, a more significant distinction between the separate motifs of astronomy and music that define Ternovskii's and Marusia's vision. It is one which is related to another key aspect of Andreev's portrayal of women. Ternovskii, with his wisdom of the cosmic forces of life, is sensitive to the 'music' in the stars, while Marusia's very being embodies music. Music, as a form of woman's intuitive expression, bears close relationship in Andreev's work with the potentially destructive force that is part of revolution. In view of this it follows that Marusia is the spirit of necessary revolt, while Ternovskii represents the hope for future rationality, for the restoration to the eternal course of the stars. These two expressions of ontological reality reflect Andreev's uneasy reaction to the stirrings of revolution. His feelings were divided between an essential enthusiasm for the radical force of change, and a horror of the inevitable violence that change would bring with it.<sup>332</sup> This dual reaction is frequently discernible in Andreev's attitude to the

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330 James B. Woodward, *Leonid Andreev: A Study*, Oxford, 1969, p.138.

331 *ibid.*, p.132.

332 *ibid.*, pp.131-2.



potential of female expression. Woman's voice is in tune with the force of life, yet simultaneously presents a threat to the status quo.

The special power of woman's voice emerges in many of Andreev's stories which evoke a fusion between the thunder of destruction and the silent aftermath. Woman's fundamental affinity for silence bears the threat of an apocalyptic shriek which results in the disruption of organized society, the world of men. In several stories and almost all his plays, Andreev's heroines possess a singular and mysterious power which stems from their relationship to silence. It is a form of silence which, with its unavoidable sound, jeopardizes the male definition of the world. In *Lozh'* (1900, *The Lie*, 1916), the woman refutes the hero's 'lie', which is his belief in her infidelity. Her refusal to define their relationship according to his lie drives him to murder her. He discovers that her death is merely a continuation of her denial of the lie. It is a deafening silence which denies him knowledge of the truth forever, and leads him to despair. The scream beneath the soundlessness is also evoked in *Smekh* (1901, *Laughter*, 1916), in which the woman's final ringing peal of laughter is the climax of her unresponsiveness to her admirer's declaration of love. She is so overcome with hysteria that she cannot speak. The laughter - 'Such a laugh I had never yet heard!'<sup>333</sup> - bursts forth directly after his romantic speech, in which he states pointedly: 'I had never spoken so well.'<sup>334</sup> The clamour of woman's speechlessness overwhelms the ordinary words of men.

Women's own natural condition of silence offers them security. In *Lozh* the reader is not concerned with the woman's death. The tragedy lies in the power of the grave as a facet of the male drama. A similar view of the power of woman's silence in death can be found in *Molchanie* (1900, *Silence*, 1916). Vera, depressed and silent, will not communicate the reason for her anguish to her parents. Her father, Ignatii, knows 'that nothing will come of their conversation with Vera.'<sup>335</sup> Indeed, she does not respond to her parents' questions. That she commits suicide after their evening conversation marks her death as a continuation of the silence that constituted her part in the dialogue. Vera's mother, grief-stricken, is paralysed and struck dumb. The singing

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333 Andreev, *Smekh*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.3, p.9; 'Такого смеха я еще не слышал!'

334 *ibid.*, p.9; 'никогда я не говорил так хорошо.'

335 Andreev, *Molchanie*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.290; 'что ничего не выйдет из их разговора с Верой.'



canary, which Ignatii identifies with Vera's soul, has been set free, completing the voiceless effect of the feminine presence which surrounds Ignatii.

Silence is a natural characteristic of women's personality. The author even manages to convey the impression of feminine silence in his plays in which women, as the main protagonists, are at the centre of the dialogue. His play *Anfisa* (1909) is considered to be one of the few works which deals with the nature of male-female antagonism, or 'the conflict between the sexes'.<sup>336</sup> It examines the love of three sisters for the same man. Married to the eldest, Aleksandra, Kostomarov seduces Anfisa and plans to seduce the youngest, Ninochka, during the course of the play. All three sisters are in some way associated with a lack of voice in direct relation to Kostomarov. Aleksandra, who knows her husband has already been unfaithful to her, never communicates with him directly. Soon after seducing Anfisa, Kostomarov remarks:

What is she playing? Without words, without words, she is always without words. (Gloomily.) Do you know she has not said a single word all day?<sup>337</sup>

To the younger sister Ninochka, in the first stages of his desire for her, he says: 'You have eyes like those of the silence in the forest.'<sup>338</sup>

The dialogue of the three sisters abounds with unspoken longings and secret experiences. It is, above all, the presence of the deaf grandmother which imposes a pervading hush over the action. Despite the fact that she cannot hear, conversation is difficult in her presence. Kostomarov draws constant attention to her peculiar, soundless existence which he cannot comprehend. He fears the riddle of her identity. Even as a child he feared her knitting, symbol of the thread of life. He states that he does not believe she can be creating so innocent a thing as a simple sock.

Kostomarov's awareness of the sisters' silence, and his constant unease in the presence of the deaf grandmother, are not coincidental. They mark the sharp difference which exists in Andreev's view of male and female contact with the environment. The absence of voice is an inherent quality in woman, defining her position not only in society, but

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336 Woodward, *op.cit.*, pp.230-33.

337 Andreev, *Anfisa*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.11, p.311; 'Что она играет? Без слоб, без слов, все она без слов. (Мрачно.) Ты знаешь, она сегодня целый день молчит.'

338 *ibid.*, p.253; 'У тебя глаза, как у молчания в лесу.'



also in the natural order. For the two woman revolutionaries in *O semi poveshennykh*, the isolation of the prison cell presents no conflict. The description of their mental processes places their own expression at a remove. The maternal Tatiana thinks only of the others. Musia, in the mould of the impassioned martyr, evokes an intuitive affinity with death through her thoughts of music, symbol of imminent destruction and oblivion. Their peaceful, introspective consolations contrast with the stress caused in the male characters by the inability to communicate with the outside world. This robs them of their virility, of their masculine identity. It is this absence of masculine subjectivity which Kostomarov fears. Silence is woman's special but unfathomable identity. In *Anfisa*, the grandmother's silence leads Kostomarov to question:

Who is she?(...) She is a woman - what does that mean? She is an old woman - what does that mean? What images are preserved in that worn out, decrepit memory?<sup>339</sup>

To men the absence of expression is an unnatural condition. Andreev's work displays a fascination with woman's silence as a possible antagonistic force in men's lives. On the one hand it represents the link to a plane existing beyond the sphere of the rational world. This intuitive force can become the medium for man's own unity with the universe. Such a valuable attribute also presents danger. Male conflict in Andreev's work arises out of the abuse or misunderstanding of this attribute. The disturbing quality of silence in the lives of men is the real significance of woman's silence. As woman's most acute form of expression, silence introduces a threat, because failure to control it represents man's divorce from true life, from the elemental world of which woman is a part. Despite the destruction of the heroines in *Mysl'* and *Ekaterina Ivanovna*, it is not their silencing by men which is perceived as the final tragedy, but men's failure to recognize woman's voice in its most natural form, which is silence. In *Anfisa* and *Molchanie*, the mute world which is created by the feminine presence constitutes man's tragedy. It is an oppressive condition, which the men experience as a threat to their ability to assert their identity. In both cases this is a reflection of the hero's capitulation to the everyday mediocrity.

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339 *ibid.*, p.218; 'Кто она?(...) Она женщина - что это значит? Она старуха - что это значит? Какие образы хранит ее дырявая обветшалая память.'



of life. In Andreev's *T'ma*, it is the hero's realization that he has been ignorant of the untold misery of prostitution, which provokes his awareness that he has been living a lie by pursuing revolutionary activity on behalf of a lifeless idea.

Man cannot share woman's special connection to silence. As he becomes stifled by its presence, it acts as a form of judgement upon him. It is the judgement of the natural life-course betrayed. In *Molchanie*, Ignatii searches for answers to his daughter's death. He makes speeches to himself justifying his role as a father. He is answered only by the silence of his daughter's grave and of his wife's paralysis, from which he yearns to wrest one word of pity. In *Anfisa*, Kostomarov senses the threat of silence to his well-being from the beginning of the play. In Act 1, he says of the grandmother:

I am afraid of her deafness, in which there is so much discernment. I am afraid of this silence in which there is so much unreckoned, but resounding falsehood!<sup>340</sup>

His fear of the cry behind the silence predicts the events of Act 3 when Anfisa is driven to make a public declaration of the relationship between herself and Kostomarov, which forces him into a decision to leave with her. By Act 4 the full impact of Anfisa's outburst is felt. It is at this point that Anfisa's music disturbs Kostomarov with its wordlessness. Silence begins to erase identities:

K: You are always in black. Who are you Anfisa?

A: (smiling) Who are you Fedor Ivanovich?

(Both start laughing strangely and stop at once)

K: A strange game. But I want to talk seriously. Today you haven't said one word all day, Anfisa. Maybe you haven't noticed, but you haven't said one word all day, Anfisa.<sup>341</sup>

The ensuing dialogue is built around the subject of her silence, which Kostomarov states he finds 'unbearable'.<sup>342</sup> Anfisa explains:

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340 *ibid.*, p.218; 'я боюсь этой глухоты, в которой так много чуткости, я боюсь этого молчания в котором так много неразгаданной, но громко кричащей лжи!'

341 *ibid.*, p.327; '-К: Ты всегда в черном платье. Кто ты, Анфиса? -А: (улыбаясь) Кто вы Федор Иванович? -(Оба странно смеются и сразу обрывают смех) -К: Странная игра. Но я хочу говорить серьезно. Сегодня ты весь день молчишь, Анфиса. Ты, можешь быть этого не замечаешь, но ты весь день молчишь, Анфиса.'

342 *ibid.*, p.328; 'невыносимым'.



Didn't I scream yesterday? Well I can still hear that scream, it still rings in my ears. But it was someone else who screamed, whereas I - fell silent.<sup>343</sup>

Anfisa poisons Kostomarov. The grandmother, symbol of the inevitable course of life, places the final seal on the dialogue. Repeating her words from Act 1, to indicate that the drama has come full circle, she speaks the final line of the play:

There is nothing to be done. Everything is done.<sup>344</sup>

and she adds: 'Be quiet.'<sup>345</sup>

Just as silence is woman's unique form of expression in Andreev, so woman's scream is her most penetrating silence. To force the expression of her despair is to invite irrevocable disaster. The power of the scream/silence engulfs the protagonists of the drama which provoked it. In the final act of *Mysl'*, Kherzhentsev, losing his mind, tries to understand why his superior rational idea failed to resolve the problem of life. He struggles to reason with the servant girl, Masha, who repeatedly replies that she knows nothing, that she simply lives. Kherzhentsev cannot accept this. He feels that her ignorance of culture (the theatre, the Bible, science) conceals a deeper knowledge:

You know something Masha, you know something valuable Masha, unique, which offers salvation, but what? But what?(...) No, Masha, it is not true that you know nothing, that is a lie, and I cling to you on purpose.(...) No, you know something, Masha, you know something that you don't want to tell. Why did God give voice only to his devils, while his angels are without words.<sup>346</sup>

Woman's silence is a condition which is natural to them because of their greater affinity with the unspoken mysteries of the universe. But in the lives of men it plays a paradoxical role, one which often reflects Andreev's own ambivalent feelings about the nature of revolution. Women, attuned to the universal, have no need for voice

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343 *ibid.*, p.329; 'Вчера ведь я кричала, да? Этот крик я слышу, он стоит в моих ушах. Но это кричал кто-то другое, а я - молчала.'

344 *ibid.*, p.348; 'Нечего делать, все сделано.'

345 *ibid.*, p.348; 'Молчи.'

346 Andreev, *Mysl'*, Berlin, no date, pp.57-58; 'Вы что то знаете, Маша, вы что то драгоценное знаете, Маша, единственное, спасительное, но что? Но что?(...) Нет, Маша, ничего вы не знаете, это ложь, и я напрасно цепляюсь за вас.(...) Нет, вы что то знаете, Маша, вы что то знаете, о чем не хотите сказать. Зачем Бог дал язык только диаволам своим, а ангелы безсловесны.'



in worldly affairs. At the same time, men need to protect that silence, that spirit of rebellion, in order to preserve their earthly world. If they fail to do so, they lose touch with 'living life', by favouring theory which is devoid of inspiration, by cultivating social reality which is without spirit. At this point woman's silence, like nature betrayed, takes its revenge. Man struggles to control it, but only manages to force the scream which is the ultimate silence of destruction. Woman's voice released marks the onset of oblivion, often in death, but always in absolute discord between man and ontological reality.

### 3.2.2 Separate voice

In Andreev's work, the ambivalent nature of woman's voice is conveyed through the experience and interests of men. It is men who are in the role of subject. The conflict of the dramatic action is centered in the male role. Women's fortune or misfortune is a symptom of man's objectified environment. When the problem of woman's expression is explored through a female subject, the ambivalence still exists, but it is present in an altogether different kind of paradox. For women, it is the first stage of controlled silence which acts as a disturbing and frequently destructive force. The final release by contrast, often also a dual scream/silence, heralds not hopeless finality, but deliverance. It brings the relief of separate identity.

The path towards an albeit temporary separatism through the discovery of one's own voice is a theme which distinguishes the writing of women in Finland. The lack of adequate representation of women's interests in public affairs is a subject frequently raised in the work of Canth and Talvio. L. Onerva and Jotuni study the assertion of woman's identity through independent expression in personal relationships.

Talvio was particularly interested in the experience of women within the national awakening, which she records in *Kansan seassa* (1900, 'Among the people') a fictional account based on her own experiences of public campaigning. It is significant that the heroine's drama focuses on a public speech she makes. Iida is banished from her community for stating aloud her observations of the dissolute life of the upper classes. Specifically offensive is her comment on the Swedish-speaking gentry's unwillingness to learn the Finnish language. The issue is pertinent. Language, like speech, is an important factor in



competent representation. The gentry retaliate by denying her the right to speak, first by questioning her competence. They decide that:

it is degrading to let a young hussy like that come and give them advice.<sup>347</sup>

Secondly, they make it clear that it must not happen again.

Canth is equally sceptical about definitions of national loyalty. In her story *Laulaja*, she contrasts the respect shown to the famous, but self-indulgent male singer, with the hidden sacrifices of his half-sister who stays at home to support her mother. Canth examines the discrepancy between real, human responsibility, left in the hands of unnamed women, and the widespread recognition given to men in public life whose sense of duty amounts to no more than the pursuit of their personal career and fame. The story asks which of these two individuals is really working to promote the interests of the people of Finland.

Canth returns to the theme of the conspiracy to suppress woman's voice in almost every one of her plays, handled most dramatically in her last, *Anna Liisa*. Two years before the action of the play has begun, the heroine has killed her baby born from an unwanted pregnancy. This action is the first consequence of the public conspiracy to conceal woman's experience. The author shows that the incident has its root cause in the ignorance about their own sexuality with which girls are led into womanhood. Canth further uses maternal infanticide as an emotive crime which contrasts with the virtuous image of Anna Liisa among her friends and family. Canth demonstrates the extent to which Anna Liisa's identity is defined by those around her, most of all by her father and fiancé. Both refuse to listen when she tries to tell the truth about herself and interrupt her with assertions of her matchless virtue. Anna Liisa is silenced by the responsibility of maintaining the illusion about herself, in order to maintain the illusory sense of propriety which serves as protection for the community. When her crime is discovered, just as she was forced to take sole responsibility for the fate of the child, she is forced to bear the sole burden of guilt.<sup>348</sup> Canth not only blames the absent man who escapes any legal redress, but impugns the whole

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347 Talvio, *Kansan seassa*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.52; 'on alentavaa antaa tuollaisen tytönletukan tulla neuvomaan itseään.' Note that in discrediting Iida, her public speaking is equated with sexual impropriety.

348 The father's mother helps Anna Liisa dispose of the baby's corpse but accepts no moral responsibility.



structure of social custom and official justice which fails to inform women and fails to hear them.

The public denial of woman's experience encourages their sexual exploitation. This is a point with which Talvio also takes issue. In *Pimeän pirtin hävitys* and *Muuan äiti*, the central female characters are initially at a loss to explain their situation because they have not been taught the moral double standard. Later they come to realize that they have no legal or social channels for protesting against male aggression. Even where they are heard, they are not believed. Their silence is endorsed to ensure the preservation of the status quo. In *Muuan äiti*, the mother of the novel's title discovers that her son has seduced their servant girl. The mother is immediately aware of her own social duty:

She must keep her mouth shut, her heart shut, her whole being so frozen, that even her face should not reveal the slightest trace of disturbance.<sup>349</sup>

She also perceives lack of representation as the source of her problem. She realizes she is considerably well-informed about the medical profession's theories of irrepressible, male sexual needs. This is public, scientifically recognized fact. But she has no knowledge of her own position:

now she remembered that even several doctors were of the opinion that a man's health suffers without that life. It was loathsome to think of it!

If only there was someone she could talk to, someone she could ask, who could give her some information.<sup>350</sup>

These women writers demonstrate that the absence of female representation is closely related to a powerful mechanism of social repression, silencing woman's experience in the name of unassailable forces of justice, such as morality or religion, and with the help of irrefutable sources of authority, such as science or the law. The result is a society which condones any male behaviour towards a woman, no matter how much it transgresses its own code of conduct, precisely by

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349 Talvio, *Muuan äiti*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.505; 'Täytyi painaa suu kiinni, sydän kiinni, kaikki niin lukkoon, ettei kasvoissaakaan näkyisi mitään merkkejä levottomuudesta.'

350 *ibid*, p.512, 'nyt hän muisti että useat lääkäritkin ovat sitä mieltä, että mielen terveys kärsii ilman sitä elämää. Iljettävää sitä oli ajatella!

Kun olisi joku, jolle voisi puhua, jolta voisi kysyä ja saada selvitystä...'



disavowing woman's right to speak. Women are unable to take control over their own lives because they are deprived of the authority to describe their environment in their own terms. Forced into isolation, they suppress their own voice, which, through lack of common example, they believe to be deviant.

There are two clear consequences of this state of affairs. Repressing her voice allows woman to enjoy social integration. Refusal to do so results in banishment either in death or in some other form of silence, like imprisonment. However, there is also a third solution. This is to retain one's own voice but to accept its separate nature and to function on the periphery of society, as an outsider. This does not offer the security of integration, but it provides a programme for survival. This feature of women's lives is portrayed in L. Onerva's work as a central problem of human interaction in many stories which deal with the breakdown of communication. The difference between this form of exclusion and that which leads to destruction is that it is imposed from within. It becomes a subjective choice which enables the heroine to define her existence. Canth's Anna Liisa and Talvio's Hanni are doomed because they try to live according to the rules defined by society even when they discover this is a deception. L. Onerva's heroines decide to live according to their own rules, even if they are forced to live as outcasts.

L. Onerva concentrates on the problem of transition in the process of woman's self-discovery. She sees this not simply as a matter for each individual but also as a mark of her generation. In *Kiusaus*, the liberated Liina Syvärin describes herself as the 'immature child of immature times'.<sup>351</sup> In the story *Itsenäinen nainen* (1909, 'Independent woman'), she portrays two old school friends with contrasting destinies. By comparing these two characters, the author explores the dilemma between choosing peace of mind, through the integration which is granted by submitting to the traditional role of wife and mother, and choosing self-knowledge which brings emancipation in loneliness. Ilmi is disillusioned with the quality of her freedom because of her isolation:

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351 L. Onerva, *Kiusaus*, in *Vangittuja sieluja*, p.135; 'epävalmiin ajan epävalmis lapsi'.



the whole business of independent woman is just a concept, an empty play on words.<sup>352</sup>

But the domestically inclined Aino, fascinated by Ilmi's independence, realizes that once a knowledge of that freedom is obtained, it is impossible to surrender it:

Admit it, you wouldn't exchange your unhappiness for my happiness.<sup>353</sup>

Woman's experience as an outsider is expressed in all its complexity in Jotuni's first full-length play *Vanha koti* (1910, 'The old home'). Jotuni studies the problem from several angles, both as a drama of woman's personal life, and as a condition of the social and political organization. The play presents the relationship of its heroine to the members of her community as well as to the developments of political change in Finland. In this play the very structure of the dialogue explores woman's voice.

Jotuni's style in her earlier short stories provides the basis for an interpretation of the theme of female outsider in a dramatic context, so it is worth examining this first. Jotuni was exceptionally sensitive to the parallel between human dialogue and the public definition of the social order. She observed how the nature of dialogue helped to maintain woman's experience in a world of concealed events and placatory lies. A playwright first and foremost, Jotuni makes extensive use of the technique of dialogue in her short stories, many of which consist of mere snatches of conversation. The construction of woman's silence is a theme which surfaces particularly in Jotuni's first two collections of short stories, *Suhteita* (1905, 'Relationships') and *Rakkautta* (1907, 'Of love').<sup>354</sup>

A number of stories in these collections raise the point that the real conditions of women's lives are given exposure only when unavoidable, and even then only in the most euphemistic fashion. In several cases the reader's participation is limited to only one side of the

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352 L. Onerva, *Itsenäinen nainen*, in *Murtoviivoja*, Helsinki, 1909, p.76; 'koko itsenäinen nainen on vain käsite, turha sanaleikki.'

353 *ibid.*, p.77; 'Myönnä, ettet vaihtaisi onnettomuuttasi minun onneeni.'

354 Her later stories tend to develop the economic issues of woman's position.



dialogue, as in the telephone conversation of *Hilda Husso* (1905).<sup>355</sup> The reader is witness to the title character's part of the dialogue, as she tries to obtain financial support for her illegitimate child from the father. Her use of language reveals her inferior status and her lack of influence. It is above all her ridiculously conciliatory manner which serves to emphasize her exploitation. She describes her situation in terms which avoid placing any responsibility with the man:

This isn't anything serious, not serious and not anything at all, just an ordinary matter, quite understandable, these things happen all the time.<sup>356</sup>

Similarly, by a sequence of correspondence in which only the woman's letters are available in *Kirjeitä* (1907, 'Letters'), Jotuni examines the emotional life of a married woman in love with another man whose child she is carrying. The story, like so much of Jotuni's work, expresses the drama of life as a process of coping, instead of relying on a romantic hyperbole of love. Jotuni sees this hyperbole as a negative, false model of life presented particularly to women.

The fusion of the scream/silence is also conveyed by this semi-dialogue technique. An example of this is Berta's tirade against her paralysed, vegetable husband in the story *Unta!* (1905, 'Sleep!'). In monologues of this kind Jotuni creates the impression of a soundless presence, which underlines the silence of woman's expression. As in Andreev's *Molchanie*, the expressionless eyes of the paralysed spouse remain fixed upon the main protagonist. For Andreev's Ignatii, the oppressive feminine silence signifies his loss of contact with true life. For Berta, her husband's silence is her first chance at self-expression. It provides her with her first opportunity to voice her version of their common existence:

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355 There are two stories with this title. This reference is to the first, which appears in the 1905 collection. Its sequel appears in the collection *Kun on tunteet* (1913, 'Since we feel').

356 Jotuni, *Hilda Husso*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.1, p.68; 'Eikähän tämä nyt niin suuri tapaus, ei tapaus eikä mikään, tavallistahan se on, ymmärtäähän sitä, ainahan sitä sellaista sattuu.'



How I have suffered wrong-doing - my whole life. - No one, no one can imagine how much I have suffered - when I think of it my soul aches - my whole body screams.<sup>357</sup>

The emptiness of the revenge she now exacts reflects the social wall of silence which surrounds her nonetheless. Life has meant:

To struggle - to struggle to the point of exhaustion - and having won, there is no one to tell -.<sup>358</sup>

Jotuni's concept of freedom depends on mutual interaction. Much of her work shows that an absolute freedom is illogical in her world-view.<sup>359</sup> The release of woman's voice represents only the surface layer of the story. At a deeper level the monologue is a reflection of Berta's married life. Jotuni's technique is a device to convey to the reader the hidden nature of woman's viewpoint. By this method Jotuni exposes in her work a whole sub-culture of woman's experience.

While Jotuni believes that individual freedom is depends on human interaction, female separatism is nevertheless portrayed as an inevitable course for emancipated woman. This contradiction, which is by no means unique to Jotuni, suggests a redefinition of what it means to be a member of society.<sup>360</sup> Jotuni shows that the silencing of woman, which is necessary for her apparent social integration, is precisely what turns her into an outsider. It does so because it removes her own identity, which must exist in limbo between her inner consciousness and her external image. Asserting one's own identity leads to public alienation, another, more obvious, form of being an outsider, but one which allows woman self-expression as an individual. The problem for

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357 Jotuni, *Unta!*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.1, p.134; 'Että minä olen kärsinyt vääryyttä,- koko elämäni.- Ei kukaan, kukaan, voi aavistaa, mitä minä olen kärsinyt, kun minä ajattelen, kirvelee sieluani - koko ruumiini huutaa.'

358 *ibid.*, p.134; 'Taistella - taistella itsensä väsyksiin - ja kun on voittanut, ei ole kenelle sanoa -.'

359 See for example *Vapaus* (1905, 'Freedom'), which suggests that total freedom is something the individual strives for but cannot live with, or *Herran teitä* (1905, 'The ways of the Lord'), which deals with responsibility and freedom of action. The idea is also implicit in many of her plays, such as *Miehen kylkiluu* (1914, 'Man's rib'), in which personal freedom is a concept related to class morality.

360 It is similar to the dilemma of choosing between integrated self-destruction and isolated self-preservation in the work of Canth and L. Onerva. This sense of peripheral existence remains a central theme of feminist writing today. See for example Joanna Hodge, 'Subject, Body and the Exclusion of Women from Philosophy' in Morwenna Griffiths and Margaret Whitford, eds, *Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy*, London, 1988, pp.152-68. Hodge discusses the difficulties of applying Descartes' 'universal' sense of identity to women's experience of their identity.



women becomes the attempt to establish interaction, to be accepted, but this time on their terms, instead of by virtue of the total capitulation of their identity.

Jotuni's work focuses on this process of struggle. It exposes the social resistance to woman's redefinition of her role. In the story *Nainen* (1905, 'Woman'), which raises the theme of motherhood, Jotuni criticizes social hypocrisy in the conventions of family ideology, and also presents an ironic view of abstract glorifications of motherhood. A woman declares she has no wish to marry but would like to bear the child of her suitor. The man is disgusted at the woman's suggestion:

It would be an affront to religion, morality, to society and custom.<sup>361</sup>

He himself fails:

to recall that he was already the father of many a child, but not yet the husband of a single wife.<sup>362</sup>

The story presents a familiar and straight-forward criticism of the double standard which dictates chastity of mind and body for 'recognized' wives and sexual availability for other women. In addition to this, Jotuni creates a portrait of a woman who fulfils the maternal ideal of the day as it was expressed in the work of Strindberg or Tolstoi. She offers her love generously, without the predatory self-interest of marriage. She is also drawn to the exalted function of motherhood beyond its parochial meaning:

I would like to create life, eternity through my child.<sup>363</sup>

The man's reaction reveals how inopportune such a sentiment is, were it to be adopted by women in real life. In Jotuni's study of romantic relationships it is not, for better or worse, the freedom seeking 'eternal mother' ideal in *Nainen* which men truly expect, but the devoted erotic comfort of Alina in the story *Herman* (1907). Here male-female

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361 Jotuni, *Nainen*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.1, p.81; 'Sehän olisi vasten uskontoa ja siveyttä, vasten yhteiskuntaa ja tapoja.'

362 *ibid.*, p.81; 'eikä muistanut, että hän oli jo monen lapsen isä, vaikkei vielä yhdenkään vaimon mies.'

363 *ibid.*, p.81; 'Luoda elämää minä tahtoisin, iankaikkisuutta lapseni kautta tahtoisin.'



relations are succinctly defined in Alina's words; 'I am listening', and Herman's reply: 'Listen. You are good, as you listen.'<sup>364</sup>

Jotuni demonstrates that definitions of woman's experience are subject to self-serving distortions. Ignored as in *Untal*, unacknowledged as in *Hilda Husso* or unacceptable as in *Nainen*, women's experience exists at best on an underground level. This theme which emerges in Jotuni's first two collections of short stories becomes more explicit and politically significant in her following work, *Vanha koti*. The play is generally considered to mark a departure from her earlier stories. It does however pursue the line of Jotuni's observation of human dialogue as a parallel of social organization. In particular, the development of the main character, Teresia, extends the theme of woman's expression as a problem of identity, integration and rebellion. One reason for the neglect of this aspect of the play, and the consequent assumption of a change of direction in Jotuni's work, is that critical interpretation has tended to look forward to her later writing in order to examine the development of her dramatic works. Attention has been drawn to the play's thematic parallels with Gor'kii's *Meshchanstvo* and *Na dne*, both of which treat the subject of capitalist degeneracy.<sup>365</sup> Class interests and economic influences feature much more strongly as topics of Jotuni's later work. *Suhteita*, *Rakkautta*, and *Vanha koti* show evidence of this direction in her work, but concentrate rather on concepts of identity and individual responsibility. This preoccupation with identity reflects in part Finland's search for self-determination, in which women's right to vote eventually emerged as an important issue. The collections of short stories, published in 1905 and 1907 respectively, belong to a period when Finland witnessed radical reorganization of its system of government. The former four-estate Diet was replaced by a unicameral legislature. Meeting for the first time in 1907, the Finnish parliament included nineteen elected women members. The subsequent wave of Russian oppression and the failings of the government encouraged social unrest and class divisions. Just as in the social structure of *Vanha koti*, there existed a chaos beneath the order of the new political system. The importance of the political background of *Vanha koti* is evident from the reaction of the censors. Jotuni was forced to make several changes in

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364 Jotuni, *Herman*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.1, p.148; '-Minä kuuntelen. - Kuuntele, olet hyvä, kun kuuntelet.'

365 Irmeli Niemi, *Maria Jotunin näytelmät*, Helsinki, 1964, referred to on p.22.



order to have it performed at the National Theatre in Helsinki. The original manuscript placed greater emphasis on social issues and further developed the theme of the strike, and the ideological debate in the play.<sup>366</sup>

The result of the changes was that Jotuni's treatment of her subject is more subtle, but no less significant. The melancholy impression created by the estrangement of the characters has been compared with Chekhov's style.<sup>367</sup> The estrangement is conveyed through the structure of the dialogue which is richly punctuated by pauses. Almost all these silent breaks occur in the sections of dialogue which include Teresia and signify her isolation. Her words provoke silence. Throughout the play, Jotuni manipulates the very technique of dialogue to conjure the silence and solitude which envelop Teresia.

The play centres on a family scene which mirrors the conditions of unrest in the social hierarchy. The first act opens with an impression of growing disturbance undermining the patriarchal order. The tranquility of the Jynkkä estate, where the action takes place, already appears vulnerable as news arrives about the threat of a strike. In addition to there are allusions to the unsuitable affair between Artturi, heir to the estate, and Eliina, the housekeeper's daughter. The entrance of Artturi's sister Teresia, returning to the family home after a long absence, provides the catalyst for the disintegration of the established order. Teresia's home-coming, coinciding with the existing unrest, provokes differences of political opinion. It also provokes revelations of illegitimacy and incest which indicate the corrupt nature of the lifestyle of the older generation. All this eventually leads to total breakdown, with the grandfather Jynkkä's death, Eliina's suicide and Artturi's descent into madness.

Teresia's impact on the action stems from her voice of outsider. The voices of the other female characters also suggest alienation, but in their case it has taken the form of an isolation through an imposed silence. Their apparent integration is revealed to be a deception based on the misrepresentation of their experience and identity. Although it is Teresia's actual expression which is the greatest propelling force behind the drama, this expression remains in fact remarkably detached and disinterested throughout the three acts of the play. Teresia has no

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366 *ibid.*, pp.30-32.

367 *ibid.*, p.32.



personal malice in exposing the hidden secrets of the family relations. When she does raise the matter of Eliina's identity as Jynkkä's illegitimate daughter, it is in a private conflict over morality with her grandfather. Later she even tries to obtain official recognition on behalf of the disinherited Eliina. All this incites disaster as it becomes clear that Artturi and Eliina have been unwitting, incestuous lovers. Speaking the truth aloud brings on the chaos, but the root of disharmony is shown to lie in the very way of life of the estate, symbol of the old order. It is contrasted with the impulse of integrity, which characterizes not only Teresia, but also the representative of the working classes, the strike leader Kalle Hallinen.

The women who belong to the old order are encompassed by a silence which denies public recognition of their reality. Even the minor character of the healer Miina, who brings to light for the audience much of the details of the intrigue, functions on the level of secrecy. It is she who voices the blunter realities of the situation, such as the inducement of a miscarriage as the only practical alternative to Eliina's incestuous pregnancy. Her conversation takes place in whispers and euphemisms, emphasizing the unspoken nature of women's affairs.

More central to the drama are mother and daughter. Mrs Ekbom, Eliina's mother, is bound by the double standard which confines her to the status of a domestic servant in the home of the man who fathered her daughter. When the worker, Hallinen, proposes to Eliina, Mrs Ekbom can overlook his socialism and strike leadership, though she disapproves, but she cannot accept the suggestion of a non-religious marriage with her daughter because he proposes it 'publicly'. Clearly, Hallinen's candid rejection of church weddings is favourably contrasted with the hypocrisy of Mrs Ekbom's illicit relationship with Jynkkä, but Jotuni also shows that it is precisely Mrs Ekbom's own lack of recognition which leads her to put faith in formal codes of representation.

Eliina is the most tragic victim of the silence which surrounds her. Throughout the play, never once does she have the opportunity to express the truth about herself. She suffers the anguish of being forced to suppress the truth about her relationship with Artturi, whose child she is carrying. Her own ignorance of her identity is another dimension of her silence. It accentuates the pathos of her situation. Increasingly, her conversation with those around her follows a pattern in which she



is unable to articulate a definite reply. On learning the truth, realizing that Jynkkä died from the shock of discovering her relationship with Artturi, she perceives her identity as that of her father's murderer. To protect the innocent child she is carrying, she commits suicide. Her final outburst, her only articulation of her experience, takes place with no listeners on stage and constitutes the announcement of her death. Her scream is swallowed up by her silence.

These female figures are all marginalized by the social structure to which they endeavour to belong. Miina, the healer is a witch type, functioning on an underground level with her mysterious powders. Mrs Ekblom lives according to a lie which denies her status. Eliina is the one who is most completely annihilated, and in this she resembles many of the heroines in Canth's work, who are casualties in a society which allows them no place but death.

Teresia, whose arrival unleashes the chaos concealed beneath the order, is an outsider of another kind. Like many of L. Onerva's thinking women, she survives through a form of separatism which is dictated by her own values. Jotuni seems to suggest that this is the best women can hope for in present circumstances. Teresia has broken free of the constraints of the old order, but the liberty she enjoys also isolates her. For Jotuni this is a problem which is specific to women's lives. Even the strike leader Hallinen, who rejects the hierarchy and is rejected by it, is shown to belong to a new order. He leaves for town, where he has friends from whom he will obtain help. Teresia has no such course open to her.

Teresia's return to her former home is itself provoked by a sense of estrangement. We learn that her marriage and town life did not offer her the freedom she had sought in leaving the estate. She hopes to recreate a sense of belonging by rediscovering her earlier romantic feelings for a doctor in the neighbourhood. At the same time, she appears as a representative of progressive ideology. As early as Act 1, it is Teresia who dares to challenge her grandfather's world-view, in a conversation where she expresses her sympathy 'for the working people and progress'.<sup>368</sup> The doctor is also present and the exchange predicts the more serious confrontation between Teresia and Jynkkä in Act 2, also in the doctor's presence. Jotuni constantly intertwines the private and the public in Teresia's voice, demonstrating the difficult relationship

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368 Jotuni, *Vanha koti*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.28; 'työväki ja kehitys'.



between the two for women. Jynkkä witnesses a romantic scene between Teresia and the doctor, and accuses her whole generation of immorality. He interrupts her initial words of protest, but she refuses to submit to his definition of her behaviour. It is this rebellion which enables her to establish her own voice. She raises the point of his own sexual hypocrisy, and takes issue with his abuse of power over his family and his exploitation of working people. It is his demand for her silence as a woman, defined in the accusation of her personal immorality, which leads to her political rebellion against the whole social structure he upholds. He continues to try and undermine her through a personal attack: 'Be quiet, whore.'<sup>369</sup> But she fights him with his own argument. She questions his own sexual behaviour, which has disinherited his rightful children like Eliina. Jotuni demonstrates that woman's sexual exploitation is encouraged by the denial of woman's right to representation. For this reason Teresia's challenge goes beyond a defence of her reputation. It announces the revolt against the political power structure.

Teresia is the only character to address the issue of Jynkkä's abuse of his position openly. She does so in defence of her self-expression. Even the doctor considers her outburst cruel and unnecessary, stating that 'No one demands this frankness from you.'<sup>370</sup> This causes an irreversible rift between Teresia and the doctor, as she is unable to accept a partner who adopts social methods of conspiracy. She senses in this a threat to her own expression of her identity. She answers him:

My sense of justice demands it of me, my heart and peace of mind demand it of me.<sup>371</sup>

She realizes that to follow her conscience is to be inextricably bound to a life of solitude, but this is ultimately the most hopeful solution for her:

Yet even if the words are wrong, and they are always wrong, at least there is the liberation from an oppressive weight, a stifling closeness. I have a burning need to be alone sometimes. To think without hate or love, to forget people -- to lift my thoughts to an inaccessible solitude. And for that you need wrong words.<sup>372</sup>

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369 *ibid.*, p.51; 'Vaikene, portto.'

370 *ibid.*, p.52; 'Ei kukaan vaadi sinulta sitä suoruutta.'

371 *ibid.*, p.52; 'Oikeudentuntoni vaatii, oma sydämeni ja rauhani vaativat.'

372 *ibid.*, pp.52-53; 'Vaan olkoot sanat vääriäkin, ja vääriä ne aina ovat, on sitten irti jostakin painavasta taakasta, tukahduttavasta läheisyydestä. On polttava tarve



Teresia's words are 'wrong' because they are the words of revolution. Her voice of rebellion expresses the need for separatism.

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saada joskus olla yksin. Ajatella ilman vihaa ja rakkautta, unohtaa ihmiset - kohota ajatuksen saavuttamattomaan yksinäisyyteen. Ja siihen tarvitaan väärä sanoja.'



**PART II**  
**FEMININE AESTHETICS**







## CHAPTER FOUR

## 4 VOICE (II): Finding Expression

If the release of woman's voice was an announcement of revolution, then the status quo was maintained in her silence. Women's experience was distinguished from men's by a silence which was enforced explicitly in public life, implicitly in social custom. This bore implications not only for woman's political voice, but also for her artistic expression. This is particularly relevant under a government where creative expression became a channel for airing political views. In Finland and Russia, the lives and works of writers were affected by fluctuating degrees of state censorship.<sup>373</sup> The purpose of censorship was to eradicate anti-government sentiments, as well as to control immoderate temerity in matters of religion or sexual morality.<sup>374</sup>

In addition to the formal restrictions imposed by state censors, the demands of critics and public act as a type of censorship. Feminist literary scholars have identified a variety of literary and social structures, which confine women writers to the periphery of the literary canon.<sup>375</sup> This in turn constitutes an obstacle to women who decide to write and become aware of an apparent lack of literary precedents.<sup>376</sup>

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373 Writers often relied on allegory for airing political views and there is much biographical data on the extent of rewriting to satisfy the censor. The 1890s saw increased leniency in Russia: Tolstoi's *Kreitserova sonata*, written in the late 1880s, was suppressed until 1891. In the initial, short-lived relaxation of censorship following the unrest of 1905, Juhani Aho wrote *Vapaalle kynälleni* ('To my free pen'), an essay on the new sense of press freedom and the previous constraints on publication.

374 For conditions of censorship in Finland see e.g. Pirkko Leinó-Kaukiainen, *Sensuuri ja sanomalehdistö Suomessa 1891-1905*, Helsinki, 1984; in Russia see e.g. V. Rozenberg and V. Iakushkin, *Russkaia pechat' i tsenzura v proshlom i nastoiashchem*, Moscow, 1905.

375 See for example Joanna Russ, *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, London, 1983; or Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist*, Oxford, 1986.

376 See Dale Spender, ed., *Feminist Theorists: Three Centuries of Women's Intellectual Traditions*, London, 1983, which records this observation by a number of women writers at the beginning of their careers. Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf were to remark on this experience earlier this century, reiterated in the 1980s by Alice Walker.



At the turn of the century, with the concentration on woman's role as wife and mother, the portrayal of women in literature was associated with themes of love and sexuality. To study female psychology meant to study woman's emotional life. Women writing about themselves were viewed as writing about sexuality. The very act of publishing was an exposure which could be equated with immorality. Women's opportunities as a writer were limited by the persistent notion of the propriety of their silence in public.

In these respects Finnish and Russian literature at the turn of the century offers an interesting point of comparison. Of the most influential authors of the period in Finland, at least one third were women. By contrast in Russia, only one woman author, Zinaida Gippius, was to secure a firm place in the contemporary literary canon. Other Russian women writers, although often widely read and even sometimes favourably viewed by the critics, were excluded from the canon because of their thematic focus on 'female' issues such as marriage and children.<sup>377</sup> Their work was seen as addressing specifically feminine subjects which could not be classified as universal. As writers, therefore, they were not considered to belong to the cultural nucleus which helped shape the ideological and aesthetic trends of the period. The same assessment applied to many 'secondary' women <writers in Finland.

It proved to be informal rather than formal censorship which conditioned the acceptance of women writers within their cultural environment. Attitudes about women's competence as authors combined with those concerning the portrayal of woman in the formulation of acceptable norms of style, topic and characterization. This process also served to mould woman's literary identity.

#### 4.1 Women in Chekhov's Dialogue

If the absence of voice is central to the portrayal of women, then it is necessary to consider the work of Chekhov as a particular case. It has

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<sup>377</sup> Examples of this attitude can be found for example in connection with Anastasia Verbitskaia, whose books were in great demand in libraries, or Nadezhda Teffi and Olga Shapir, who were reviewed favourably by critics like Mikhailovskii and Korolenko. That the themes of love or marriage belonged any more to women's writing than men's was an erroneous belief. These subjects are, after all, central to the masculine realist prose tradition and the novel genre.



been suggested that Chekhov provides women with dialogue in an unprecedented way in his plays.<sup>378</sup> At the same time, the single most debated issue in Chekhov's work is the nature of his artistic expression. Chekhov's writing has been perceived as a riddle of form and meaning. Chekhov's contemporary, the critic M.P. Nevedomskii, wrote:

it is hardly possible to find in our entire fiction a more complex topic for critical analysis than the work of this melancholy artist. He is positively an enigma.<sup>379</sup>

The difficulty of defining Chekhov's art has been noted from the turn of the century to the present day.<sup>380</sup> The unique role of women in Chekhov's discourse offers insight not simply into Chekhov's portrayal of women, but also into the nature of Chekhov's drama, and the nature of literary criticism.

#### 4.1.1 Interpretations of Woman's Role in Chekhov's Stories

The presence of women in Chekhov's work is not limited to his drama. The many interpretations of Chekhov's portrayal of women in his prose can provide the groundwork for an analysis of women in Chekhov's use of dialogue. These interpretations reveal some of the important issues and hazards in understanding the author's aims in creating his female characters.

Chekhov's work has stimulated more discussion on his attitude towards women than is the case with any other Russian writer. This is true in both feminist and non-feminist literary criticism. Like Tolstoi, Chekhov has been called a misogynist. Certainly there is little evidence

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378 Nicholas Moracevich, 'Women in Chekhov's Plays' in Jean-Pierre Baricelli, ed., *Chekhov's Great Plays: A Critical Anthology*, New York, 1981, p.202.

379 M.P. Nevedomskii, 'Bez Kryl'ev: A.P. Chekhov i ego tvorchestvo' in *Iubileinyi chekhovskii sbornik*, Moscow, 1910, p.51; 'то вряд ли найдется во всей нашей беллетристике более сложная задача для критической характеристики, чем творчество этого грустного художника. Это положительно загадка какая-то,' This and all subsequent translations of quotations from Nevedomskii's article are from the version in Stanley Rabinowitz, ed. and trans., *The Noise of Change: Russian Literature and the Critics (1891-1917)*, Ann Arbor, 1986.

380 In her preface to A.P. Chudakov, *Chekhov's Poetics*, trans. Edwina Jannie Cruise and Donald Dragt, Ann Arbor, 1983, Cruise writes: 'The history of Chekhov scholarship has been the history of an incomplete vision' (p.vii). Likewise Savely Senderovich's article 'Towards Chekhov's Deeper Reaches' expresses the view that 'many fallacies mark a century of Chekhov's criticism,' in Savely Senderovich and Munir Sendich, eds, *Anton Chekhov Rediscovered: A Collection of New Studies With a Comprehensive Bibliography*, East Lansing, 1987, p.2.



to suggest that Chekhov was a tendentious feminist. But it is equally difficult to demonstrate that he was a tendentious misogynist. The earliest significant assertion of Chekhov's alleged misogyny was made by Sophie Lafitte in her biographical study of the author.<sup>381</sup> Lafitte bases her conclusion on evidence, recorded in his letters and notebooks, of his reluctance to marry, although he maintained several romantic friendships with women.

But how accurate or, more pointedly, how useful is such an assertion with regard to interpretations of Chekhov's fiction? Many studies of Chekhov's female portraits have revealed that one cannot speak of an unequivocal misogyny in his work. Chekhov contrasts for example with Tolstoi or Strindberg, in whose work misogynistic tendencies have been widely attested.<sup>382</sup> This recognition has also contributed to an understanding of their work. Marie Sémon's detailed analysis of Tolstoi's portrayal of women has exposed the author's pathological repugnance of the female being and his fierce desire to control woman's sexuality.<sup>383</sup> This has provided greater insight into Tolstoi's views of human relationships, education, morality, paternalism and motherhood.

In Tolstoi's work, as in Strindberg's, women exist almost uniquely as projections of the themes of love and marriage. Female sexuality is a facet of the external world with which man is in conflict and must come to terms.<sup>384</sup> This cannot be said of Chekhov's work. Chekhov's female protagonists are integral to the form and content of his work: Chekhov's female characters function as often as his male characters as part of the structure of the action, not as foils to it, and they express the subjective world-view presented by the text.

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381 Sophie Lafitte, *Tchékhov 1860-1904*, Paris, 1963, p.198.

382 In her study of *Kreutzerova sonata*, Barbara Heldt has made a rare attempt to show Tolstoi's 'path towards feminism'. She bases her argument on the author's criticism of marriage as a trade and other social injustices towards women (Heldt, *Terrible Perfection*, pp.38-48). Andrea Dworkin's analysis of the same novel has demonstrated, however, that Tolstoi's rational awareness of the inequalities fostered by social institutions does not necessarily preclude his basic dislike and fear of women (Dworkin, *Intercourse*, pp.3-23).

383 Marie Sémon, *Les femmes dans l'oeuvre de Léon Tolstoi*, Paris, 1984.

384 Cf. Strindberg's *Fadren* or Tolstoi's *Diavol'*. Even where the central protagonist is a woman, as in *Fröken Julie* or *Anna Karenina*, the problem with which the reader is presented is how (universal) society can come to terms with woman's (specific) sexuality.



Unlike Tolstoi, Chekhov did not dwell on the subject of female sexuality. On the topic of sexual taboo in Chekhov's work, Simon Karlinsky has written that:

the very concepts of 'adultery', 'adulteress', 'the fallen woman', so very important in Russian literature of the Victorian age, simply do not exist as far as Chekhov is concerned.<sup>385</sup>

This is important to remember when considering individual portraits in Chekhov's work. One cannot assume that the presence of a female character is a thematic link to a commentary on love, marriage or sexuality. Such a context is too limited for a study of Chekhov's women. Conclusions of Chekhov's misogyny have been based on the author's apparent view of a predatory sexuality in women, comparable to that portrayed by Strindberg. In the words of Virginia Llewellyn-Smith:

If Chekhov is to be described as a misogynist it is on the basis of the vehemence with which he depicted woman in her sexual role.<sup>386</sup>

Ronald Hingley has remarked that a 'comparatively feminist' attitude to the constraints in women's lives emerges in Chekhov's stories of 1894, but that between 1895 and 1897 most of the women in his stories appear predatory.<sup>387</sup> Beverly Hahn, who has commented on many of Chekhov's keen perceptions of female psychology, has also remarked on the predatory feature which recurs in various portraits of women.<sup>388</sup>

The stories which have provoked this observation depict women who wield an impressive power over men, as in *Supruga* (1895, *His Wife*, 1965), *Anna na shee* (1895, *The Order of St Anne*, 1965), and most notoriously, *Ariadna* (1895, *Ariadne*, 1965). In all these stories the women are secondary characters whose personalities are conveyed by the male protagonists. The wife in *Supruga* is, on this occasion, a foil to a study of the husband. In *Anna na shee* the grasping wife is the product of her environment. Living up to the role model of her society mother

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385 Simon Karlinsky, 'Chekhov: The Gentle Subversive' in René and Nonna D. Wellek, eds, *Chekhov: New Perspectives*, Englewood Cliffs, 1984, p.50. The point here is not that these types never occur in Chekhov's work, but that they do not have the same thematic function. In Chekhov's work, in contrast to Tolstoi's, sex itself is not degrading, only the reactions to it.

386 Virginia Llewellyn-Smith, *Chekhov and the Lady with the Dog*, Oxford, 1973, p.35.

387 Ronald Hingley, *The Oxford Chekhov*, London, 1964-1978, Vol.7, p.6.

388 Hahn, *op.cit.*, p.216.



(herself merely a social type), she gradually comes to reflect her husband's values of ambition. Being the 'Anna around the neck' of her husband is not what her husband fears (as he pretends), but exactly what he expects of her. His early reference to this is not a warning but a prediction. It belongs to the scenario of receiving the Tsar's favour, indicated by the fact that this scenario is a word for word reproduction of the husband's account of how it takes place. As far as *Ariadna* is concerned, it should be remembered that the story is not in any way a portrait of a woman but the portrait of a woman-hater. At no point is the reader invited to participate in the psychology of Ariadna herself, only in her disagreeable lover's description of her.<sup>389</sup> Moreover, the latter does not hate Ariadna alone, but the whole of the female sex, whom he holds responsible for his own weaknesses.

In his examination of the love theme in Chekhov, Donald Rayfield states that, for the most part, Chekhov's women become less predatory by the time he writes the stories of 1898 and 1899.<sup>390</sup> However, examinations of the love theme once again concentrate on stories in which the dramatic dénouement takes place in the male character, such as in the trilogy which comprises *Chelovek v futliare*, *Kryzhovnik* and *O lyubvi*, (all 1898, *A Hard Case*, *Gooseberries*, *Concerning Love*, all 1975), as well in *Dom s mezoninom*, *U znakomykh* (1902, *All Friends Together*, 1975), and Chekhov's best known love story *Dama s sobachkoi* (1902, *The Lady with a Dog*, 1975). In these stories male impotence contrasts with a certain female vitality. Men come to recognize their failure to take action, while women accept life's course. The love theme reflects a transition in the male character, while the female remains a constant. In *Dama s sobachkoi*, the protagonists' adulterous affair causes anguish to both partners, but it is in Gurev's process of personal growth that the development of the plot lies. The object of the hero's love in *Dom s mezoninom*, the delicate, passive Zhenia, has been cited as an example of Chekhov's unsatisfactory and sentimental portrayal of

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389 Virginia Llewellyn-Smith has pointed out that Ariadna's lover Shamokhin, the 'fanatical misogynist', is the object of the satire, but nevertheless sees Ariadna herself as 'damned' and 'openly criticized' by the author. See Llewellyn-Smith, *op.cit.*, p.24. It is, however, difficult to see Shamokhin, who elicits no sympathy whatsoever, as even a veiled mouthpiece for the author. The story shows that men who hate women do so because of what they see in women and because of their own behaviour in response to that perception.

390 Donald Rayfield, *Chekhov: The Evolution of His Art*, London, 1975, p.186.



women.<sup>391</sup> However, Zhenia is neither representative of Chekhov's women characters nor is she the model of a consistent type of ideal womanhood in his work. The story itself contains the contrasting figure of Lidiia, the active and opinionated social worker. It is true that the shortcomings of Lidiia's work are underlined in the story, but so too are those of the inaction of the hero, her moral antagonist. As an ideal of womanhood, Zhenia offers insight into the hero's psychology rather than Chekhov's.

The static aspect of women in these love stories, and the appearance of women through the eyes of men (as an element which elucidates the male portrait) represent a narrow dimension of the range of women in Chekhov's work. Moreover the one-dimensional nature of a secondary character applies to many of the male portraits in works which cast women as the main protagonist, such as *Bab'e tsarstvo*, in which the male object of the heroine's romantic interest has a changing image projected by her own thoughts and longings. Several of the stories from the 1880s, as well as later works such as *Sluchai iz praktiki* and *Nevesta* (1903, *A Marriageable Girl*, 1975) portray a woman's struggle for self-determination.

The study of love and the debate over misogyny in Chekhov do not provide a suitable starting point for the analysis of most of his female characters. It may even be misleading, and can limit the scope of interpretation. One powerful female type, whose characterization is not dependent on a male protagonist, is Aksinia in *V ovrage*. Carolina de Maegd-Soëp has described Aksinia as Chekhov's 'most accomplished portrayal of the predatory female'.<sup>392</sup> As argued in Chapter One above, Aksinia's acts of violence and revenge are not dictated by an inherently feminine, animalistic sexuality. They are the consequence of her frustration with her economic and social position, which robs her of any identity. To assume that her actions can only be explained as the result of a predatory instinct is to assume that women do not want or need those things which men have access to and which are normally described as universal human aspirations: the right to reward for one's labour, to a role in society, to self-determination, to identity. The assumption that the portrayal of woman is related only to themes of

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391 Xenia Gasiorowska writes that Chekhov 'preferred sweet and charming, if socially useless, girls to cold efficient activists' with reference to Zhenia and Lidiia (Terras, *Handbook of Russian Literature*, p.520).

392 Carolina de Maegd-Soëp, *op.cit.*, p.283.



love or sexuality obscures the layers of meaning in the text. *V ovrage* clearly deals with the hierarchies and tensions of the peasant community, which should not be forgotten when considering Aksinia's motivations. Likewise the heroine of the story *Dushechka* has been seen as a parody of the feminine instinct for sacrificial love. Yet Olenka has very little in common, in fact, with a stereotype of feminine devotion. She makes no sacrifice, is not constant in love and there is little comment in the story about her emotional life. Her defining characteristic is passivity, which enables her to mould effortlessly to her environment. Remarking on this, Barbara Heldt has described Olenka as paradoxically dominating her surroundings.<sup>393</sup> This harmonization with her environment is not necessarily a paradox, however, but a motif in another kind of parody: that of female passivity as it occurs in literature. Chekhov's portrait can be seen, therefore, not as a parody of female devotion, but of the conventional characterization of literary heroines. Olenka's passivity reflects precisely the typical aspects of the vacuousness of Russian heroines: the romantic theme is merely an element of this. She uses the words and ideas of others ('weak' male heroes themselves, in keeping with Russian realist tradition), she becomes suitably opinionated, and she 'carries on' after the hero's death to find a new ideology. Heldt points out that the narrative 'trivializes Olenka while seemingly making her heroic.'<sup>394</sup> This comment could easily be applied generally to the treatment of the heroine in the nineteenth-century Russian novel. Chekhov's own Russian heroine Nadia in *Nevesta*, afflicted by doubt, disillusion and uncertainty, is far removed from this type (despite the motif of her male 'teacher').

The question of misogyny must be left aside in a study of Chekhov's female protagonists, particularly when one considers his traditionally most acclaimed work, his four major plays. The women he portrays belong to the broader landscape of the depiction of life. It is significant that with the full maturity of Chekhov's art, women characters become more and more central to the human dialogue. An examination of Chekhov's artistic technique and the culmination of its mastery in his final plays reveal that the voice that Chekhov gives to his women protagonists succeeds in making them subjects in their world. It is also closely related to the very nature of his artistic method.

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393 Heldt, *Terrible Perfection*, p.52.

394 *ibid.*, p.54.



#### 4.1.2 Chekhov's Plays

In his stories, Chekhov's narrative technique gradually subdued authorial voice. A. P. Chudakov has analyzed the evolution of Chekhov's narrative system from the early emphasis on an impartial narrator to an increase in dialogue.<sup>395</sup> This process developed Chekhov's own objectivity as an author, while the protagonists themselves became more subjective. Also, as Chudakov observes, thereafter the hero's voice in the narrative diminishes:

We encounter the voices and spheres of consciousness of many heroes - a stylistic "skim" of the depicted environment generally.<sup>396</sup>

Similarly, one of the most significant aspects of the evolution of Chekhov's dramatic art, is the fact that his plays gradually reduce the focus on a dramatic hero.<sup>397</sup> It is the absence of dominant protagonists, eventually eclipsing human interaction in favour of powerful evocation of mood and landscape, which has earned Chekhov his reputation as the most profound innovator in the history of theatre.

The development of Chekhov's full-length plays has been described as the evolution of one play, which is the unnamed early work now known as *Platonov*.<sup>398</sup> Rayfield notes that the plays of the 1880s, in which he also groups *Diadia Vania* (*Uncle Vanya*, 1988) of 1897 (as it is a reworking of the 1889 *Leshii* retaining much of the original dialogue), are dominated by a magnetic male anti-hero.<sup>399</sup> Chekhov's three other major plays, *Chaika* (1896, *The Seagull*, 1988), *Tri sestry* (1901, *Three Sisters*, 1988), and *Vishnëvyyi sad* (1904, *The Cherry Orchard*, 1988), include three or four female characters at the centre of the action. The action is thus shared among a variety of characters in which women figure at least as prominently as men. At the same time the plays develop towards a reduction of the human profile. The projection of the cherry orchard itself as a protagonist in Chekhov's last play is a well-known example of this technique. Chudakov has written on the

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395 A.P. Chudakov, *Chekhov's Poetics*, trans. Edwina Jannie Cruise and Donald Dragt, Ann Arbor, 1983, p.49.

396 *ibid.*, p.100.

397 Rayfield, *op.cit.*, p.94.

398 *ibid.*, p.94

399 *ibid.*, p.94



integral function of apparently superfluous objects and stage-props within the discourse.<sup>400</sup> David Magarshack has termed Chekhov's last plays as dramas of 'indirect action'.<sup>401</sup> His analysis confirms that the muted form of dialogue is one of the chief qualifications for this definition. Magarshack points out that unlike Chekhov's early plays, the dialogue no longer appeals directly to the audience.<sup>402</sup> Thus, not only do Chekhov's later plays remove the hero's voice, but they convey action through universally diminished human expression. Donald Rayfield has described the effect of this dual process:

the plays of the 1880's are "mono-heroic", while those of the 1890's and 1900's have no heroes, and a polyphonic structure that is independent of the characters.<sup>403</sup>

The increasing presence of female characters in Chekhov's plays coincides with this process of diminishing heroic voice. It reveals an understanding of the silence which is part of women's lives as an element of the human condition. This contrasts with Andreev's use of women's silence as an antagonistic, external feature at variance with the male subjective world. It resembles rather the impression of unheard voice which characterizes women's dialogue in the plays of Canth or Jotuni. Chekhov perceives the role of the marginal figure. His tragic protagonists reject existing society in favour of a future vision of a better world, but remain tied to the present by their failure to offer a satisfactory solution. Chekhov's characterization, however, differs from the usual depiction of the outsider. The traditional visionary outsider, frequently a prophet figure crushed by present conditions of life, has a heroic, tragic profile. Chekhov's characters are enlightened but ordinary. They exist on the periphery of the social order, unable to integrate yet not completely excluded from it.

Chekhov's work does not express the tendentious feminist separatism which can be traced in Canth's or Jotuni's work. It does, however, express woman's experience of lack of voice as a dilemma which is both personal and universal. It relates the condition of outsider to the nature of human existence and to the present condition of women's lives. In *Chaika*, Nina wrestles with her self-image both as a

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400 Chudakov, *op.cit.*, p.118.

401 David Magarshack, *Chekhov the Dramatist*, London, 1952, p.160.

402 *ibid.*, p.160.

403 Rayfield, *op.cit.*, p.94.



woman and as an artist. This is the first of the three plays which Rayfield describes as 'emasculated' of their heroic type, although as he points out, it still retains a vestige of this type in the character of Trigorin.<sup>404</sup> The love theme in which Nina is cast may not, on the surface, appear unconventional in an ordinary heroine. She is simply a woman rejected by the man she loves. But this motif does not limit her character to a subordinate love interest, for she is an indispensable element of the themes of art and individuality which run through the play. Not only does she attempt to regain control over her emotional life, but faces the responsibilities of her identity as an actress. She contrasts with Treplev, the young writer who gives her her first opportunity to act. Treplev fails to come to terms with his personal disappointment in his relationship to his mother, in his love for Nina, and in his failure to achieve recognition as a writer.

Nina's struggle over her identity concerns her vision of herself as either the discarded 'seagull' of Trigorin's story or as an independent actress. This struggle is a process of acquiring 'the ability to endure.'<sup>405</sup> Her survival is based on self-knowledge. This Treplev cannot achieve because he continues to seek identity as a heroic type. He envies Trigorin's fame, and Trigorin robs him of both Nina's and, as he sees it, his mother's love. Chekhov's own development away from the heroic type is reflected in the problem of self-image which the characters of both Treplev and Nina elaborate. Trigorin and Arkadina are part of this process too, but to a lesser extent because they face no dilemma as artists, and they are also complacent in their personal lives. In Nina, Chekhov creates subjective voice for a woman, which he uses to express a universal problem: the beginnings of self-discovery, in this case in both life and art.

Chekhov conveys the sense of paradox which women experience as a result of their objectified role in life and art. On a realistic level, Nina must contend with the reputation of a provincial actress:

in Yeletz I shall have the more educated local businessmen pressing their attentions on me. It's a rough trade, life!<sup>406</sup>

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404 *ibid.*, p.94.

405 Chekhov, *Chaika*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.13, p.58; 'уменьше терпеть'. The translation of this and all other quotations from Chekhov's plays are from the versions in Chekhov, *Plays*, trans. and introduced by Michael Frayn, London, 1988.

406 *ibid.*, p.56; 'в Ельце образованные купцы будут приставать с любезностями. Груба жизнь!'



The comment is well-observed. This single reference to Nina's reception as an actress succinctly exposes a major obstacle in woman's development as an artist. It highlights the difficulty women have in acquiring an artistic identity which is not devalued by the way they are treated as women. On a deeper, psychological level, Nina's attempts to rid herself of her identification with the seagull of Trigorin's story is an expression of women's struggle to reject the role of object in a story, not only as the foil to the hero but in the very nature of their social identity.

Nina's survival reflects the inadequacy of the heroic type. By the time Chekhov wrote *Tri sestry*, his rejection of the heroic voice was complete. While *Chaika* concentrates on the problem of artistic and individual identity, *Tri sestry* focuses on human communication. Since Stanislavskii's famous observation on 'subtext' in Chekhov's work, many scholars have characterized the nature of discourse in his plays with terms such as 'symbolic', 'evocative', 'impressionistic', or 'Absurdist'. These terms attempt to define the absence of direct communication between the characters (as well as between author and audience). Epic-like soliloquy is absent from the dialogue. In his study of the interaction in *Tri sestry*, Harai Golum has tried to develop a characterization of communication techniques in the dialogue.<sup>407</sup> Golum has remarked on the explicit references in the text to processes of communication,<sup>408</sup> indicating the centrality of this theme throughout the play. The article presents a detailed account of the various devices used by the sisters in their conversation: unspoken responses, evasive comments, deliberate misunderstandings, and sensitive communication disguised as refusal to understand. Most significant is Golum's observation of the importance of silence in the dialogue, with specific reference to the exchange towards the end of Act III between Andrei and his sisters, in which he makes a confessional speech while they remain silent.<sup>409</sup> Woman's role in dialogue can be clearly observed here. Andrei speaks uninterruptedly, yet his speech is not a monologue, and the sisters' presence forms an essential part of the discourse. As Golum points out

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407 Harai Golum, 'Communicating Relationships in Chekhov's Three Sisters' in Senderovich and Sendich, eds, *op.cit.*, pp.9-31.

408 *ibid.*, p.11.

409 *ibid.*, pp.25-26.



If we compare it [Andrei's speech] to a typical Shakespearean monologue (soliloquy) - by Hamlet, Brutus, Iago, Macbeth - we can see the difference. The Shakespearean characters reason with themselves and with the audience.(...) Andrey's monologue is an act of communication *on stage*.(...) The sisters need not talk back to him in order to make that voice resonate in his ears; moreover, they are not very good at talking back throughout the play anyway.<sup>410</sup>

The observation that the sisters are 'not very good at talking back', yet substantially contribute to the dialogue is pertinent to the nature of female discourse. Although it makes no special assessment of gender roles, Golum's detailed analysis of the dialogue in *Tri sestry* identifies many of the communicational structures which relate to woman's expression. Golum underlines the role of euphemism, misrepresentation and silence in the discourse (particularly the sisters' part in the discourse), all features which have been noted in the previous chapter.

Golum comments perceptively on the significance of the sisters' knowledge of foreign languages as a 'sixth finger', a communication skill which is harmful by virtue of its superfluity.<sup>411</sup> As Masha remarks in Act I, it is a skill which is not required by their position in life. Her statement: 'we know much more than we need to' must be taken in its broadest sense.<sup>412</sup> This is particularly so in Irina's case. Irina knows Italian in addition to the other languages spoken by Masha and Olga. Irina bemoans the fact that she has forgotten her Italian at the moment she recognizes that she will not achieve her ambition either of falling in love or of going to Moscow, both metaphors of her longing for (personal) intimacy and (public) contact.<sup>413</sup> Irina's Italian, degenerating from lack of use, is symbolic of both her need and capacity for human communication.

As with the problem of identity in *Chaika*, the problem of communication in *Tri sestry* is equated with the ability to come to terms with one's self. In Chekhov's plays, the process of developing an inner life is dependent on a form of isolation similar to the outsider

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410 *ibid.*, p.26.

411 *ibid.*, p.24.

412 Chekhov, *Tri Sestry*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.12, p.131; 'мы знаем много лишнего.'

413 The thematic emphasis on the search for intimacy and contact applies to all three sisters. Golum has noted in particular the sisters' persistent efforts to be alone together, their urge to realize a potential intimacy which others spoil (Golum, *op.cit.*, p.22).



experience expressed in women's writing. Chekhov's characters are neither absolute outcasts, nor tragic anti-heroes, but peripheral and interactive outsiders. This identity characterizes almost every one of the protagonists in *Vishnëvyyi sad*. They do not belong to their environment yet remain peripherally connected, both temporally and spatially, to the world around them. It is significant that all Chekhov's three major plays are set at a distance from Moscow and St Petersburg, while the characters retain some link to these locations. This is most apparent in *Tri sestry*, set in an unnamed, remote corner of Russia whose spiritual identity has been described by one English translator of Chekhov's work as 'Exile'.<sup>414</sup>

#### 4.1.3 Chekhov and Literary Criticism

The expression given to women in Chekhov's major plays owes a great deal to the nature of his craft. It was Chekhov's own view that art should be representative of life, and that this in itself represented a genuine purpose in art.<sup>415</sup> By endeavouring to convey life as he observed it, Chekhov was able to create living characters, male and female, in his work. Most importantly, his success in reproducing the art of his prose writing for the stage is largely due to the absence of authorial voice and the abandonment of soliloquy in his plays. He uses a structural form which is able to take into account the restrictions on woman's voice. This form was not in keeping with the contemporary canon, however, and it is in the response to Chekhov's art that we can begin to perceive cultural prejudices, which have implications for woman's own creative role.

Despite Chekhov's present-day reputation as a major figure in the history of prose and drama, the understanding and acceptance of his work have not been straight-forward. The effacement of narrative voice and heroic voice presented critics with problems of interpretation. It was difficult to guess which of the characters may have been the mouthpiece for Chekhov's own world-view. The author was reproached for his lack of 'tendency'. Problems of artistic identity and the communication of ideas were reflected in the author as much as in his work. In 1910,

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414 Michael Frayn, 'Introduction' in Chekhov, *Plays*, p.lvi.

415 See, for example, references to Chekhov's remarks on this point in letters in Chudakov, *op.cit.*, pp.194-95.



Nevedomskii observed that despite the existing wealth of criticism and commentary on Chekhov, 'neither the intimate essence of his work, nor his personality emerges with sufficient clarity.'<sup>416</sup>

Nevedomskii's article assesses the Chekhov criticism of a number of contemporary critics including Lvov, Mikhailovskii, Bulgakov, Shestov, and Merezhkovskii. In conclusion he states:

Only one firm and indubitable fact emerges from all these contradictory analyzes, namely that Chekhov's critics tend to discuss the object of their criticism very much in terms of their own image and likeness.<sup>417</sup>

Nevedomskii's point is that these critics try to locate Chekhov within their tradition. Simon Karlinsky has discussed this phenomenon in his assessment of Chekhov's difficulties with the critical establishment of his day.<sup>418</sup> Karlinsky describes the reception of Chekhov's work as 'reductionist'.<sup>419</sup> By this he means the critical establishment's method of co-opting the writer into a tradition which did not befit him. In order to do this critics defined his work according to their values, rather than according to the nature of his art. Karlinsky specifies this process, beginning with Chekhov's exclusion from the canon on the grounds that his work was merely melancholy, followed by his inclusion in the canon on the grounds that this type of melancholy was part of a Russian humanitarian tendency.<sup>420</sup> Once it was no longer possible to ignore or discredit Chekhov's talent, he was generally described as a mournful poet of a fading era. This, Karlinsky argues, 'reduced' the impact of the profoundly subversive elements of Chekhov's work, elements which presented both an artistic and ideological challenge to established tradition.<sup>421</sup>

Evidence of this can be traced in Nevedomskii's article, which tries to resolve the 'unique' character of Chekhov's work within the Russian and international literary heritage. Nevedomskii contrasts Chekhov's 'semi-clear, muted images' with Tolstoi's 'three-

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416 Nevedomskii, *op.cit.*, p.51; 'ни интимная суть его творчества, ни самая личность художника не обрисовываются достаточно определенными чертами.'

417 *ibid.*, p.54, 'От всех этих разноречивых характеристик остается только одно прочное и несомненное residuum: гг. критики очень склонны трактовать объект своей критики по образу и подобию своему.'

418 Karlinsky, 'Chekhov: The Gentle Subversive', pp.31-68.

419 *ibid.*, p.33.

420 *ibid.*, pp.33-34.

421 *ibid.*, pp.44.



dimensional and full-blooded' people, Turgenev's 'transparent' images, with the 'strikingly colourful strokes' of Gor'kii and the 'delicate symbolic brush' of Andreev.<sup>422</sup> Citing from the reminiscences of Bunin and Kuprin, Nevedomskii remarks: 'It is clear that "restraint" was as much a feature of his personality as it was of his work.'<sup>423</sup> Building on this element of the writer's personality, he offers the first definition of Chekhov as '*the artist of the soul's impotence, the painter of life without pathos*'.<sup>424</sup> He further states that Chekhov's work is typified by ideological and programmatic vagueness, by a general disbelief in 'theories' at a time when social forces would have warranted such formulations.<sup>425</sup> In conclusion, Nevedomskii asserts that Chekhov 'stands utterly alone in the entire pleiad of our major writers.'<sup>426</sup>

Despite the reiteration of Chekhov's 'exceptional' style, the final section of Nevedomskii's article takes pains to demonstrate Chekhov's position within the canon by likening him to it. He endeavours to show that:

this *innovator* still falls within the organic, time-honored mainstream of our literature, continuing the work of the Turgenevs and Tolstoys.<sup>427</sup>

Chekhov's critics were evidently compelled to pull the writer firmly within the canon and thereby erase the threat of subversion inherent in his work. But what did this subversion represent to the established literary tradition? Currie has observed:

Chekhov's contemporaries sought an activist ideological program which would place him in the tradition of his immediate predecessors, Dostoevsky and especially Tolstoy. They were troubled by what they perceived to be the absence of moral zeal, the lack of a clear or consistent message and his melancholy pessimism.<sup>428</sup>

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422 Nevedomskii, *op.cit.*, p.59.

423 *ibid.*, p.67; 'Ясно, что "сдержанность" была такой же отличительной особенностью для его личности, каковой она является для его творчества.'

424 *ibid.*, p.74; '*художник безсилия души, живописец жизни без пафоса*'. (Italics in original.)

425 *ibid.*, p.91.

426 *ibid.*, p.92; 'Во всей плеяде наших крупных художников он стоит совершенно одиноко.'

427 *ibid.*, pp.105-6; 'этот новатор все-же становится в ряды представителей органической, исконной струи нашей литературы, является продолжателем дела Тургеневых и Толстых.' (Italics in original.)

428 Currie, preface to Chudakov, *op.cit.*, p.vii.



Chekhov's departure from the realist standard made his work difficult to accept. When one considers that woman's writing was inevitably alien to the existing canon (by women's absence from it as well as by their expression of different experience), it is easy to understand the prejudices to which a woman writer could be exposed. Chekhov, a man, might still be included. But this required the reassurance that his writing did nevertheless belong to the masculine prose tradition. This was a tradition which had cultivated narrative omnipresence and heroic voice. It contrasted with the form created by Chekhov, in which the muted discourse gave women equal voice. The contrast between Chekhov and the preceding tradition has been described in revealing terms by Vladimir Laksin:

the stronghold of patriarchal ideals serves as the epic soil for Tolstoy's view of the world, which is all-encompassing and objective in its breadth and versatility.(...) Rather than an epic view of the world, Chekhov has lyricism and irony, a sober delicate scepticism which flows through everything.<sup>429</sup>

Laksin's use of the terms 'lyric' and 'epic' can serve to elucidate the position of women in literature.<sup>430</sup> The comparison Laksin makes between Tolstoy's epic soil and Chekhov's lyricism infers a certain artistic hierarchy of form. By the turn of the century, the 'epic vision' was the basis of the canonized tradition.<sup>431</sup> Literary critics, in their assessment of Chekhov's stature as a writer, have tried to cultivate a theory of Chekhov's lyricism as a form of epic. When one considers that throughout oral tradition as well as the realist prose tradition of the nineteenth century, the heroic and creative force of the epic has been

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429 V. Laksin, 'An Incomparable Artist' in Leo Hulanicki and David Svignac, trans. and eds, *Anton Chekhov as a Master of Story Writing: Essays in Modern Soviet Literary Criticism*, The Hague, 1976, p.99.

430 In the following discussion the terms epic and lyric are used not according to their literal historical genre definition, but in their broadest sense to mean those qualities which are usually associated with the forms. These qualities naturally originate in the historical definitions and are informed, though not limited, by them. The epic vision implies heroicism, monumentalism, universality and totality. The lyric vision is light, expressive, implicit, humanist. Thus, for example, the lyric poetry of the Romantic age or of the Symbolist movement can still be 'epic-like' in its vision, for it seeks to express universal absolutes, often through the fate of a tragic hero.

431 See John Tulloch, *Chekhov: A Structuralist Study*, London, 1980. Tulloch applies the term 'epic vision' to Chekhov's world-view. He assesses features which characterize the 'spirit of the epic', in the relationship between 'man, the world and value' (p.101).



reserved as a masculine prerogative while the expressive form of the lyric has been seen as the limits of feminine performance,<sup>432</sup> it becomes clear that there are not only restrictions on women's creative expression, but that the notion of feminine has a secondary value in art. Moreover the epic/masculine association is understood to express universality, while the lyric/feminine is seen as spatially and temporally localized.<sup>433</sup> In view of all this, it seems, the critics feel compelled to establish the masculine credentials of Chekhov's art. Laksin describes this very process. He points out that there has been a necessity to 'shield' Chekhov from the criticism that large works of art were not easy for him by asserting that his short stories constitute 'one great novel of Russian life'.<sup>434</sup> Laksin's own view that Chekhov's stories are 'mini-novels', condensed 'histories of human lives',<sup>435</sup> repeats the pattern of trying to attach to Chekhov's work the monumental qualities of the epos. The same is true of Nevedomskii's article. Nevedomskii sees Chekhov as the creator of 'the drama of increasing lyricism which does not translate into action.'<sup>436</sup> Although Chekhov's art may appear to lack internal epic vision, its contribution to the development of art is of epic stature. Nevedomskii emphasizes the author's own heroic profile, as an artist compelled to create 'from the void', 'true to the serious, sacred, life-giving traditions of our literature', and 'keeping pace with all art - both Russian and European'.<sup>437</sup>

#### 2.1.4 Conclusion

Many attempts have been made to define the unique, subdued quality of Chekhov's expression. It has been observed that *Tri sestry* has an operetta-like (rather than opera) structural resonance in the chorus-like

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432 In respect of oral tradition this circumstance may reflect the values of collectors rather than performers.

433 Note that in Laksin's view (above), Tolstoi's epic form is, despite its patriarchal bias, 'all-encompassing and objective'.

434 Laksin, *op.cit.*, p.105.

435 *ibid.*, p.105.

436 Nevedomskii, *op.cit.*, p.106; 'драму нарастающего лиризма, не разрешающегося в действии.'

437 *ibid.*, p.103; 'из ничего', p.105; 'верен серьезным, святым, жизнь творящим традициям нашей литературы', p.107; 'шел в ногу со всем художеством, нашим и европейским.' The notion of the artist creating from the void relates to the aesthetic theory of art representing glimpses of the Divine formulated by Belinskii and others (see e.g. Terras, *Belinskij and Russian Literary Criticism*).



qualities of the dialogue.<sup>438</sup> Lynn Visson has also written on the expressive role of music in Chekhov's prose work:

For Chekhov, whose literary credo was restraint and understatement, music was a language which could transcend and replace words, impel his characters to act from the heart, and express feelings they were incapable of uttering.<sup>439</sup>

The choral lyricism so often referred to in Chekhov's work, with its avoidance of soliloquy and its expressive nature, was amenable to female discourse.

Critical approaches to woman in Chekhov's work either assess her thematic role as the object to the male subject in love and conflict, or ignore gender on a structural level. Women characters become gradually more prominent as his work develops closer towards a world-view which coincides with women's experience. The underlying themes of his late plays - the difficult relationship to work, the problem of endurance of life, the sense of peripheral isolation and longing for communication, the struggle to take control over one's identity - all belong to a vision which gradually reduces the structural value of masculine heroic philosophy in favour of an inner self-knowledge.

Tolstoi, the great epic writer and thinker, pronounced Chekhov's late plays to be incomprehensible. The reception of the first performance of *Chaika* in St Petersburg was disastrous, and it took three years for the audience to come to terms with *Vishnëvyi sad* in its first run in Moscow. Numerous critical works on Chekhov catalogue the misunderstandings and modifications which producers of his plays made in their attempts to interpret them. Chekhov's characterization did not become less life-like despite his form of dialogue, with its reliance on symbolic sounds and images. The reduction of soliloquy conveys naturalism, rather than the creation of one-dimensional characters through symbolic stylization. In 1914, Andreev noted that *Vishnëvyi sad* was ecstatically received by a German audience which did not understand a word of Russian because of its 'international language

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438 Frayn in Chekhov, *Plays*, p.366.

439 Lynn Visson, 'Chekhov's Stories and Music: The Unspoken Language' in Julian W. Connolly and Sonia I. Ketchian, eds, *Studies in Russian Literature in Honour of Vsevolod Setchkarev*, Columbus, 1986, p.274.



of pauses'.<sup>440</sup> Andreev, who portrayed women's silence/voice as antagonistic to the masculine status quo, called Chekhov's dialogue 'improbable':

people do not speak that way in real life; it is full of things half-spoken,(...) Chekhov's characters never begin and end their speeches, they only continue them.'<sup>441</sup>

The controversy surrounding the interpretation of Chekhov's plays reveals the difficulties of gaining an understanding of an artistic form which does not rely on heroic voice. The ineffectual and melancholic nature of his characters' attempts to take action may frustrate the reader, but this cannot be seen as an inherent feminine quality of his female characters. What Chekhov achieves for women in his plays and stories is to give them equal voice in the overall expression of Angst. Chekhov's 'humanism' does not take issue with the position of women any more than it did with other prevailing movements. Rather, he shows that life itself, human freedom, self-identity, art, relationships are all human problems regardless of gender, which find alternative expressions in men and women because of their social role and experience. The insistence on Chekhov's epic vision, like preoccupations with the question of misogyny, fails to do for women what Chekhov's work achieves: to direct attention away from the male hero and to take seriously the presence of woman's voice in the human condition.

#### 4.2 Using a Masculine Voice: Aino Kallas and Zinaida Gippius

If Chekhov's sensitivity to woman's own voice did elude him, it was in his assessment of women writers. His notebooks make several references to the deplorable phenomenon of 'lady writers'. His work includes the portrait of an unremarkable, bourgeois lady writer in *Ionych* (1898), who inflicts her novellas on the guest-narrator during stultifying family soirées. This attitude reflects Chekhov's own scorn of mediocrity at a time when women writers dominated 'popular

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440 Andreev, 'Pis'ma o teatre', (*Shipovnik*, 22, 1914, p.252); 'интернациональным языком пауз'. Translation of this and the subsequent quotation from Michael Green, trans. and ed., *The Russian Symbolist Theatre*, Ann Arbor, 1986.

441 *ibid.*, p.252; 'неправдоподобен', 'так в жизни не говорят; он полон недоговоренности,(...) герои Чехова никогда не начинают и не кончают своей речи, они всегда только продолжают ее.'



literature'. The 'lady writer' depicted in *Ionych* is in keeping with contemporary stereotypes of the woman with literary pretensions.<sup>442</sup> Apparently prevailing prejudices about women's role in Russian literature were powerful enough to overcome even Chekhov's broad-mindedness.

The nature of criticism and censorship are naturally rooted in the style, subject and ideology a writer adopts. In addition to this, elements of writers' personal lives, such as social background or scandal, affect the way they are perceived and the way their work is assessed. Women who write find their work frequently assessed according to the requirements of their femininity. Despite a persistent resistance to woman's voice in literary portraits, and the denial of women's right or natural inclination to a public life, favourable criticism of women's writing paradoxically suggests that the quality of the work lies in its special 'feminine' expression. This femininity is said to give a hitherto unknown dimension to literature. The implication that real writing remains a masculine domain is the most obvious obstacle that women who write have to overcome. Women writers are granted a (peripheral) place in the literary canon when they limit themselves to a given form or subject matter deemed appropriate to their gender. The work which wins this accolade of 'feminine' individuality not only accepts its limitations, but accepts also that this essence of femininity must bear nothing of the separatist features of a feminist voice.

Far superior to the recognition of sensitive femininity in the creative output of women writers is the hard-won accolade of 'masculine' qualities in their work. The effacement of any separate woman's voice suggests a peak of creative achievement. It allows equal status in woman's literary identity. In Finland and Russia, two women writers in particular were approvingly described as 'masculine' in the endorsement of their work. Zinaida Gippius and Aino Kallas achieved this significant literary status, significant not because it reflects the quality of their work, but because the epithet reveals the paradoxical position of women writers. The fact that quality is equated with

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442 Other examples of this type include Gippius' young 'poetess' Manlieva, whose story is so long-winded that everyone congratulates her out of relief when her reading comes to an end. See Gippius, *Goluboe nebo* (1896, 'Blue Sky'), in *Novye liudi*, pp.153-55. In Andreev's play *Mysl'*, Savelov mentions how he hates cypresses which stand like exclamation marks but have no content, like the writing of women, to which invites the further comment that 'lady-writers much prefer continuous dots' (p.25; 'дамы-писательницы больше любят многоточия').



'masculinity' is revealing enough in itself. More importantly, it implies that a woman writer who achieves this standard is an anomaly. In the case of both writers emphasis is given to the 'exceptional' stature of the writer in view of her sex.

#### 4.2.1 Aino Kallas

The attitude towards Kallas' work in her day was most succinctly defined in an article of 1909 by Gustav Suits, which appeared in one of the leading Helsinki cultural journals *Valvoja* ('Guardian'). Kallas had been publishing her short stories since the 1890s and also had two novels to her name by the time of Suits' article, an overview of her literary output as a short story writer. Suits was of Estonian origin and the leading figure of the *Noor-Eesti* ('Young Estonia') literary movement.<sup>443</sup> His critical acclaim of Kallas was the first important recognition in her career. The theme of Estonia was to dominate Kallas' work. She was inspired particularly by the landscapes of Saaremaa and the stories of Estonian life she heard from her husband's uncle.<sup>444</sup> Estonia not only became the setting for most of her novels and stories, but was undoubtedly the single most decisive factor behind her initial literary recognition.

Like Suits, Friedebert Tuglas was another Estonian writer who valued Kallas' work highly. Both men are torn between praising the writer on behalf of the national significance of her work, and dismissing her as a woman. Tuglas stated that:

if Aino Kallas had remained in Finland, she would have become a typical woman writer, in the manner of Helmi Krohn or at best Maila Talvio.<sup>445</sup>

Suits points out that Kallas is 'not a great, or brilliant or even productive talent', but insists that she is 'an interesting and exceptional phenomenon, at least among Finnish women writers', precisely because

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<sup>443</sup> The *Noor-Eesti* movement, like Finland's *Nuori Suomi* group, was active at the turn of the century and strove to promote a nationally conscious culture in harmony with European trends.

<sup>444</sup> Kai Laitinen, *Aino Kallas 1897-1921: tutkimus hänen tuotantonsa päälinjoista ja taustasta*, Keuruu, 1973, pp.47-49.

<sup>445</sup> Quoted in Marja Niiniluoto, 'Minun ostjakkimaisteri', (*Hetki sillalla: juhlakirja Kai Laitiselle hänen täyttäessään 60 vuotta 27.9.1984*, 1984, p.98.)



of her use of themes originating from her knowledge of Estonia.<sup>446</sup> The back-handedness of Suits' 'at least' is compounded by his further comment on Kallas' productivity:

five small, modest volumes...Can one think of anything finer: to know the limits of one's strength and produce little.<sup>447</sup>

Suits' praise of Kallas rests on the contrast between women's general literary contribution and the occasional, valuable 'masculine' woman artist:

In Aino Kallas we meet for the first time a woman writing in Finnish who from the start has wanted to be only a writer, who has understood her literary task as precisely that and not as for example an outlet for the woman question, the temperance issue, or socialism. Need I add, furthermore, that she no longer has anything to do with those literary ladies, whose output has been akin to a great dressing-table mirror in which they have wanted above all to experience their own erotic bagatelles, as well as both to see and show their sentimental sorrows.<sup>448</sup>

Suits argues that her economy of style and output is a motif of an epic/masculine vision. He remarks that she does not indulge the public at large with tales of passion and excitement, clearly an allusion to the female popular writer. In his view, her stories are characterized by an asceticism and spartan simplicity born of proud self-denial, firm stoicism and self-discipline. According to Suits, this suppression of the self (the woman) is what gives Kallas her 'individuality' (masculine identity).<sup>449</sup>

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446 Gustav Suits, 'Aino Kallas novellinkirjoittajana' (*Valvoja*, 9, 1909, p.790); 'ei ole mikään suuri tahi häikäisevä tahi edes tuottelias kyky', 'mieltäkiinnittävänä ja poikkeuksellisena ilmiönä, ainakin suomalaisten naiskirjailijojen joukossa'.

447 *ibid.*, p.804; 'viisi pientä, vaatimatonta volyymiä...Voiko ajatella mitään kauniimpaa: tuntea voimansa rajoituksessaan ja tuottaa vähän.' Suits does not mention her novels at this point.

448 *ibid.*, p.805; 'Aino Kallaksessa tapaamme ensimmäisen kerran suomenkielisen naiskirjailijan, joka on alusta alkaen tahtonut olla yksinomaan vain taiteilija, joka on käsittänyt kirjallisen tehtävänsä kirjalliseksi tehtäväksi eikä esim. naiskysymykseksi, raittiusasiaksi tahi sosialismiksi. Tarvinneeko minun vielä lisätä, ettei hänellä ole enää mitään tekemistä niittenkään kirjallisten rouvien kanssa, joitten tuotanto on ollut ikäänkuin suurena toalettipeilinä, jossa he ovat ennen kaikkea itse tahtoneet kohdata eroottiset bagatellinsa sekä nähdä ja näyttää sentimentaaliset surunsa.'

449 *ibid.*, p.805.



The loyal, one could almost say *manly* search for truth - that characteristic so rarely met in women writers - is one of Aino Kallas' main characteristics.<sup>450</sup>

The emphasis on gender demonstrates how it can be used to dismiss women's creativity. After all, men too used literature as a platform for expressing political beliefs or exploring sexual psychology. Moreover Suits' criticism of ideological tendency in women's writing seems at odds with his commendation of Kallas' Estonian themes, which take up socio-political as well as moral issues at a specifically local level. Suits, it may be concluded, is actually referring to feminist 'tendency'.

In 1909 Kallas had not in fact consciously addressed the woman question at all in her work. Unlike the other major women writers of the period, Kallas did not centre her work around female protagonists. Her most striking images of womanhood are rooted in an idealization of woman's capacity for maternal devotion. Examples of this type are to be found in her stories *Ingel* (1904), *Sotilaan äiti* (1905, 'A soldier's mother') and *Pieni kiinalainen aasi* (1905, 'The small Chinese donkey'). However, motherhood itself is not the defining feature of these characters but a certain capacity for extreme action or faith. The context of their motherhood is used to explore the individual's relationship to the collective. In *Ingel*, this relates to class conflict, in *Sotilaan äiti*, to national duty, and in *Pieni kiinalainen aasi*, to the importance of retaining a sense of humanity. The devotion of the stories' heroines resembles the dedication of purpose which characterizes the religious revivalist Maie in *Lasnamäen valkea laiva*, who by contrast abandons her family in order to await the illusory white ship.

Kallas' use of motherhood as a theme does nevertheless mystify her female type in a way which can overshadow more fundamental elements of the author's concept of the individual. This is especially true of Kallas' first novel *Kirsti*, published in 1902. At the beginning of the novel, the title heroine is a spirited but restless young woman living in the countryside. Searching for her self, she identifies with nature, yet longs for something more stimulating than her quiet, rural existence. She falls in love with and marries an intelligent young student, Pentti, who is visiting his uncle in the neighbourhood. In this relationship she

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450 *ibid.*, p.805; 'Lojaali, voisi melkein sanoa *miehekäs* pyrkimys totuuteen - tämä naiskirjoilijoilla harvoin tavattava ominaisuus - on Aino Kallaksen pääominaisuuksia.' (Italics in original.)



seems to find fulfilment. However, the couple's wedded bliss is marred by Kirsti's strong sense of wrong-doing after she succumbs to a pre-marital sexual union with her fiancé, from which she soon realizes she has conceived. She feels the child will be a reminder and a judgement upon her. She miscarries after an accident, which only serves to aggravate the situation, as does the knowledge that she can no longer have children. Reconciliation takes place at the end of the novel when she adopts the illegitimate new-born baby of a local peasant woman. The peasant woman had tried to murder her baby (a boy), motivated by poverty and her own knowledge of what it is to be illegitimate. At this moment Kirsti also confesses her own 'illicit' pre-marital sexual relations. The admission to the peasant woman, ostracized locally for sexual misconduct, that she was not a virgin on her wedding day finally provides atonement. Kirsti feels 'a sense of peace and liberation'.<sup>451</sup> The real force of her rehabilitation, however, lies in her new-found role as a mother. She realizes that there is a broader meaning to the concept of motherhood than the direct biological act of giving birth: 'to consider as one's children all those who are in need of love.'<sup>452</sup> After years of feeling fragmented, she is restored as a complete person:

She walked down the shoreside path towards Pentti, just as she had once done as a young girl, - and she carried with her new life just as she had done then.<sup>453</sup>

Kallas' first novel, *Kirsti*, was not considered an entirely successful work. In his study of Aino Kallas, Kai Laitinen takes up the main criticism of the work when it was published. This concentrated on the apparent discrepancy between Kirsti's intellectual rejection of conventional morality and her condemnation of her own pre-marital sexual union. Laitinen explains that the religious-moral dilemma which Kallas attempted to discuss led the author to ponder principles which were beyond her 'capabilities' at that time.<sup>454</sup> But Kirsti's dilemma is not essentially rooted in religious or social morality, but in her powers of self-determination. She does not see her conduct as a sin, but specifically as a 'crime', and moreover as a crime against her own

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451 Kallas, *Kirsti*, Helsinki, 1902, p.178; 'rauha ja vapautuksen tunne'.

452 *ibid.*, p.178; 'pitämään lapsinaan kaikkia, jotka rakkautta tarvitsevat.'

453 *ibid.*, p.182; 'Hän lähti rantapolkua pitkin Pentille vastaan, kuten kerran nuorena tyttönä, - ja tuoden uutta elämää mukanaan kuten silloinkin.'

454 Laitinen, *Aino Kallas*, p.37.



conscience. She explains to Pentti that 'it is a crime because I sense it as a crime.'<sup>455</sup> The contradiction in Kirsti's psychological portrait stems not so much from an unconvincing sense of moral values, but from the author's handling of male and female symbolism.

On a superficial level, the theme of motherhood in the novel appears to reproduce the contemporary idealization of the maternal vocation as the essence of the feminine psyche and as a universal mission. Kirsti finds personal identity and social place at the same time as she takes on the role of mother. Alongside this positive image of motherhood, 'masculinity' is portrayed as the source of positive identity. Kirsti's exceptional will and philosophical intellectualization are traits inherited from her father, whom she even resembles physically.<sup>456</sup> When she first meets Pentti, she recognizes her father's expression in his eyes.<sup>457</sup> These details convey Kirsti's ability to identify with the 'masculine' active impulse, which contrasts with the submissive and dependent passivity of her own mother.

The symbol of paternity, which also relates to the theme of illegitimacy, is of key significance. Kallas' work shows a preoccupation with a concept of generation as an essential element of individual identity. Generation acts as a motif of the epic-like vision in her work. Related to concepts of tradition and national identity, it is at the basis of the world-view which emerges strongly in her Estonian themes. Individual psychology cultivates personal freedom and self-will, yet is also indebted to the identifying legacy of a person's heritage. The combined motifs of 'tribe', family, and subjectivity mould the identity of many of Kallas' most powerful protagonists, such as the heroes of *Bernhard Rives*, *Lukkari ja kirkkoherra*, and *Ants Raudjalg*. Many stories which concentrate on the theme of death examine the perpetual relationship between the dying and living. The notion of continuing generations is explicitly evoked in the final chapter of the collection *Meren takaa II* (1905, 'Beyond the seas II'):

A crash sounds in the forest, and the young trees shudder, as the old generation falls...<sup>458</sup>

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455 Kallas, *Kirsti*, p.134; 'se on rikos, koska minä sen rikokseksi tunnen.'

456 *ibid.*, p.12.

457 *ibid.*, p.40.

458 Kallas, *Meren takaa II*, Helsinki, 1905, p.153; 'Metsässä käy ryske, ja nuoret puut vavahtavat, kun vanha polvi kaatuu...'



The problem for Kallas' characterization of Kirsti is that the concept of heritage is firmly established as a tradition through the male line. In focusing on a female protagonist, Kallas endeavours to transfer the epic-like dimensions of masculine heritage (nation, tribe, family) on to a feminine context. Motherhood becomes part of this 'epic' vision in the novel, as a channel for generation continuity. The concept of passing eras is referred to early on in the novel when Pentti states that neither past nor future but 'only the present is ours.'<sup>459</sup> Kirsti cannot belong to that present until she resolves her role in life's course. Her sexual indiscretion becomes a crime against her subjective control over that role. Her natural instinct was stronger than her will. 'I am going to be a mother against my will - as if by chance,' she says to Pentti, who understands her despair as a submission to petty convention.<sup>460</sup> In the final reconciliation of her role as a mother, her identity is fused with the concept of a life course: 'to be a mother, to know one is one link in that chain of development which links the past and the future.'<sup>461</sup>

Kallas subtitles her novel 'psychological sketch' (*sielunkuvaus*), and it is an early attempt by the author to address problems of self-will and subjective identity in the life of a woman. A principal weakness of the work lies in the obvious difficulties Kallas experienced in characterizing women according to a philosophy which she perceived in male terms. The heroine's psychological profile relies on popular female symbols (motherhood, sexual morality) whose familiarity obscures the theme of active subjectivity. It is significant that Kirsti senses her purpose through adoptive motherhood within the notion of generation. This indicates her self-position as a subject of influence. Her maternal role is not marked by vocational inevitability as biological or eternal motherhood implies. Kirsti contrasts strongly with the other maternal types depicted in the novel. She does not possess the 'endless desire for sacrifice' of her own mother, nor the selfless, protective tenderness of Pentti's aunt.<sup>462</sup> Both these women are self-effacing, the former without image, the latter without voice: Kirsti cannot even picture her mother without her father, while Pentti's aunt is described as

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459 Kallas, *Kirsti*, p.76; 'ainoastaan nykyisyys on meidän.'

460 *ibid.*, p.134; 'minä tulen äidiksi vasten tahtoani - kuin sattumalta.'

461 *ibid.*, p.176; 'olla äiti, - tietää olevansa yksi rengas siinä kehitysketjussa, joka yhdistää menneisyyden ja tulevaisuuden.'

462 *ibid.*, p.9; 'loppumaton uhrautumisen halu'. See also p.54.



a 'silent sounding board'.<sup>463</sup> From the beginning, Kirsti feels: 'I could be something by my own being.'<sup>464</sup> At the end of the novel she takes charge of a baby who was almost murdered. Kirsti's motherhood is deliberate. It represents a wilful element of life's course, in the same manner as paternal heritage, which can give or deny rights of identity. This element of Kirsti's characterization is not sufficiently lucid. Kirsti's intellectual dilemma over her identity is overshadowed by associations with traditional, symbolic imagery of motherhood and the religious-moral plot context.

The novel provides valuable insight into the problems of applying epic/masculine themes to studies of female subjectivity. Kallas subsequently turned away from the portrayal of female psychology, although in 1904 she was planning a novel which was to be a description of 'the new woman'.<sup>465</sup> This work finally emerged in 1907 as the novel *Ants Raudjalg*, entirely transformed, retaining a subordinate male character as the main protagonist. It was not until 1912, with the publication of a story entitled *Nainen, jolla oli aivot* ('The woman who had a brain') that Kallas attempted to rediscover female psychology. Interestingly, she abandoned the epic narrative form for this piece. Laitinen describes it as one of her most abstract works, with the protagonist having neither name nor companion, the story containing neither plot nor dialogue.<sup>466</sup> With descriptions of the woman's brain - 'It had two to three hundred grammes more brain material than usual and slightly more finely constructed curls' - and various other brains, the story explores woman's intellectual struggle for opportunities outside conventional femininity (including motherhood).<sup>467</sup> Finding nothing available, the woman's only resort is to starve the brain and thus become resigned to her 'natural' role. The brain protests, but she forces it to occupy itself with degrading, unbecoming activities, after which it subsides into the peace of ignorance and illusion. Written soon after her reading of Darwin and Lombroso, the story helped Kallas to examine the paradox she sensed in her identity as woman and as a

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463 *ibid.*, p.8-9, and p.40; 'hiljainen kaikupohja'.

464 *ibid.*, p.15; 'omalla olennollani voisin olla jotain.'

465 Laitinen, *Aino Kallas*, p.58.

466 *ibid.*, p.287.

467 Kallas, *Nainen, jolla oli aivot* (*Otavan Joulu*, 1912, p.15); 'Niissä oli parikolmesataa grammaa enemmän aivo-ainetta kuin tavallisesti ja hiukan hienorakenteisempia koukeroita.'



creative artist.<sup>468</sup> With growing awareness of woman's role in society, Kallas was gradually to introduce more female protagonists into her work.

#### 4.2.2 Zinaida Gippius

In Russia, Zinaida Gippius was praised for the 'masculine' qualities of her art. Gippius was much more conscious of her masculine artistic identity than Kallas. Unlike Russian, a characteristic of the Finnish language is that gender is not grammatically marked. Many of Kallas' first-person narratives are technically gender neutral therefore, but she often indicates her gender in other ways. She uses motifs from female custom in her lyrical, descriptive passages

I covered my face with a Saaremaa checked scarf, as if it were an ancient Estonian lament kerchief, and I grieved for lost Saarenmaa.<sup>469</sup>

In contrast to Kallas, Gippius stressed her masculine narrative identity by exclusively using a male first-person verb form in her poetry and prose fiction, which she published under her own name, as well as in her literary criticism, which appeared under various male pseudonyms.

Gippius' emphatic use of a masculine first person has received almost no scrutiny, although it is extremely unusual for a writer to adopt the opposite gender so consistently. Even in the present tense, where gender is not marked in the verb, her 'I' is sometimes explicated by the masculine 'sam' (self). This does not mean that she is portraying a male protagonist.<sup>470</sup> Male writers, particularly in Russia, have frequently described women giving birth, but they do not abandon their male narrative voice in order to evoke the woman's experience.<sup>471</sup> Chekhov's work demonstrates that the inclusion of woman's voice does

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<sup>468</sup> Kallas' recently published collection of letters reveals that one of her major concerns was the conflict of identity stemming from the roles of artist and woman. See Riitta Kallas, ed., *Kolme naista, kolme kohtaloa: Aino Kallaksen kirjeenvaihtoa Ilona Jalavan ja Helmi Krohnin kanssa vuosina 1884-1913*, Helsinki, 1988.

<sup>469</sup> Kallas, *Näky* ('Vision'), in *Lähtevien laivojen kaupunki*, p.65; 'Minä peitin kasvoni saarenmaalaiseen raitahuiviin, kuten muinaisen virolaiseen itkuliinaan, ja murehdin mennyttä Saarenmaata.' Laments belonged primarily to female oral tradition.

<sup>470</sup> It can be contrasted for example, with Bunin's use a female first person in the story *Khoroshaia zhizn'* (1911, *A Goodly Life*, 1923), in which there is a clear distinction between author and narrator.

<sup>471</sup> See for example Gor'kii's *Rozhdenie cheloveka* or Tolstoi's descriptions of women's reactions in pregnancy and childbirth, as in *Kreitserova sonata*.



not require the author to be posited as specifically female. Gippius' use of a male first person is not an attempt to explore male psychology or to introduce a male perspective to a given situation. It expresses Gippius' sense of identity as an artist and as the subject of human action. Even narrative which takes place in the third person tends to cultivate a masculine authorial voice, by centering the main psychological study on male protagonists as in her novels *Roman Tsarevich* and *Chertova kukla* or in stories on love or sex, such as *Uverennaia* or *Sumerki dukha* (1899, 'The dusk of the spirit').

Gippius' male first person is given the closest attention in Olga Matich's study of Gippius' religious poetry.<sup>472</sup> In her preface Matich indicates that she takes the poetic persona to be Gippius herself despite the masculine form.<sup>473</sup> Matich's biographical introduction to the author examines Gippius' ambivalence over her own sexuality as it is revealed in her views on marriage and her friendships with men. Matich shows that Gippius' reputation as a 'decadent' stemmed more from her social behaviour than from evaluations of her literary work.<sup>474</sup> Gippius enjoyed her own provocative sensuality, but her philosophy of human relationships stressed sacred unity between man and woman rather than physical sexuality.<sup>475</sup> Spiritual oneness as the essence of male-female love is frequently expressed in her work, most explicitly in the story *Miss Mai* (1896, 'Miss May'). The title protagonist evokes an important aspect of feminine ideal in Gippius' world-view. She embodies the eternal, but existentially vital virginity which Gippius liked to suggest about her role in her marriage to Merezhkovskii.<sup>476</sup> The name of the English heroine, May Ever, conveys everlasting spring. She represents the moment of creative impulse, eternally alive by avoiding transformation in this life. With her existentialist outlook she believes that 'people live far too long.'<sup>477</sup> While she has faith in love's passionate impulse, she

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472 Simon Karlinsky also comments on her use of masculine grammatical gender and her sexual identity in his introduction to Vladimir Zlobin, *A Difficult Soul: Zinaida Gippius*, ed., Simon Karlinsky, Berkeley, 1980, pp.7-10.

473 Olga Matich, *Paradox in the Religious Poetry of Zinaida Gippius*, Munich, 1972, p.7.

474 *ibid.*, pp.9-10.

475 *ibid.*, p.17.

476 *ibid.*, p.12. Matich refers to S. Makovskii's memory of Gippius wearing her hair in a plait (sign of virginity) in order to demonstrate publicly that her marriage was never consummated.

477 Gippius, *Miss Mai*, in *Novye liudi*, p.440; 'люди гораздо дольше живут.'



condemns marriage for bringing on the 'autumn' of life with its contentment and compromise:

And life should not be drawn out in any way, as May should not be drawn out.<sup>478</sup>

Matich's examination of Gippius' confusion over sexual identity concentrates on her private life, but points out that it also relates to her artistic identity. Concepts of masculine and feminine play a significant role in the author's art and philosophy. Gippius' metaphysical world-view is central to her understanding of the creative role. Art, like true love and life itself, should express the search for God, which will bring the individual closer to unity with the universe. Gippius' philosophy pivoted on the mystical idea of the 'three'.<sup>479</sup> In studies of identity and subjective individualism in Gippius' work as well as of her artistic persona and world-view, the author's preoccupation with the mystical significance of numerals has provoked much wider discussion than her absolute rejection of her own gender in her work. This is partly because Gippius herself offered an explanation, which Temira Pachmuss relates in the introduction to her profile of Gippius. The author claimed that she wanted to be taken seriously in her work 'as a human being, and not just as a woman'.<sup>480</sup> As a writer, she was keen to dissociate herself from other women writers. She refused to participate in a gathering of women writers because she rejected unions based on 'sexual denominators', yet in her artistic career she rigorously pursued union with an exclusively male-defined environment and theory of aesthetics. For Gippius the feminine was a marked form, the deviation from the 'norm' which is by definition masculine in gender.

Gippius explained her collaboration with Merezhkovskii and Dmitri Filosofov as a living embodiment of the 'trinity' which was so central to her religious-philosophical outlook. Pachmuss concludes that the curious publication of Gippius' own play *Makov svet* in 1908 under their three names was a manifestation of her faith in their private trinity at a time when Filosofov was drawing away.<sup>481</sup> However, although

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478 *ibid.*, p.440; 'И жизнь ничем нельзя продлить, как май нельзя продлить.'

479 For an outline of Gippius' philosophy and the significance of the number three see the introduction of Temira Pachmuss, ed. and trans., *Intellect and Ideas in Action: Selected Correspondence of Zinaida Hippius*, Munich, 1972.

480 Temira Pachmuss, *Zinaida Hippius: An Intellectual Profile*, Carbondale, 1971, p.17.

481 *ibid.*, pp.174-75.



there was clearly a conscious desire to understand phenomena according to the number three, Gippius only developed her 'trichotomous' theory in 1905,<sup>482</sup> and, soon after meeting Filosofov, she had already made a similar literary association with her story dating from 1899, *Slishkom rannye* ('Too early'), which appeared in her third collection of short stories in 1902. The story, which is among her first explicitly to address the role and nature of art, is declared to be written in conjunction with Filosofov, and is prefaced with a quotation from Merezhkovskii.

Gippius' adoption of masculine artistic principles is also evident in her critical writings. She not only used male pseudonyms but inhabited a uniquely male world, commenting on authors like Andreev, Bunin, Sologub, Gor'kii and Chekhov and entering into polemic with Belyi, Blok and Briusov. Her immersion in the Symbolist movement, despite certain realist tendencies in her prose, reinforced this position. Powerfully male dominated, Symbolist aesthetics developed an epic-like theory of femininity, in which the feminine was subordinated to the male creative impulse. The ideas of femininity inspired by Symbolism which Gippius explores in her fiction are perhaps the most transparent indication of her ability to compromise her identity as a woman, and to negate the existence of a genuine woman's voice. Her most intensive psychological portraits of female individuality contain protagonists from a world of fantasy whose role is uniquely symbolic. *Sviataia krov'* (1900, 'Sacred blood') is a tale about a mermaid's search for a soul, and *Vremia* (1896, 'Time') describes a fairy princess seeking a life force which is stronger than Time/Death. Her more realistic depictions of essential womanhood are charged with symbolic femininity, as in the story *Vechnaya zhenskost'* (1908, *The Eternal Woman*, 1972). This is also true of the author's most intimate exposé of her religious-philosophical thought, *Nebesnye slova* (1906, *Heavenly Words*, 1972). The piece elaborates Gippius' concept of the trinity: 'sky, earth, and all living things - are alive only in each other, and all three form one.'<sup>483</sup> Within this, women function only as muses, symbolizing dimensions of the narrator's mental processes. All these stories use a male narrative first person. Most explicit of all in revealing the totality of Gippius' male ego.

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482 Matich, *op.cit.*, p.26.

483 Gippius, *Nebesnye slova*, in *Nebesnye slova i drugie rasskazy*, Paris, 1921, p.70; 'все трое, небо, земля и трава, живы лишь друг другом и все трое - одно.'



however, especially in relation to her identity as a writer and her view of art, is the story *Zhenskoe* (1912, 'The Feminine').

Dismissing any importance in Gippius' masculine form, Pachmuss points out that it also applies to the Russian word for human being, *chelovek*, the word Gippius used when she said she wanted to write 'not just as a woman'. Evidence of the masculine, and not neutral, identity of Gippius' 'human being' is overwhelming in her work, but *Zhenskoe* makes it irrefutable. The story is an abstract definition of essential femininity. The narrator describes himself first as *chelovek* and then equates that identity with explicit masculinity throughout the story. The story excludes women from literature as subjects - as writers or readers - by emphatically establishing the dialogue between artist and audience as a male one. The narrator creates an exclusively male bond with the reader, stating that they love the same two women, provided the reader is also 'a human being, like me. Also a human being,- and therefore not a hero, not sick and not a monk [all masculine].'<sup>484</sup> The narrator states that nationality, station in life, or even gender is irrelevant but immediately adds: 'I am conversing with a male reader, and not a female reader.'<sup>485</sup> The story defines the eternal cycle of womanhood. Woman shifts from sacrificial motherhood to mysterious unattainability, becomes mother again through accessibility, provoking renewed search for the unattainable elsewhere. All of womanhood is objectified in these two images of 'eternal femininity', while the narrator/male/human being suggests a subjective/universal voice:

The feminine; indeed there exists but two women on this earth - mother and Olia. My humanity, my thoughts, my actions, my work, - all this is mine, and to them I offer - to mother affection without words, to Olia male desire.<sup>486</sup>

It would be tempting to see Gippius' eulogy to the feminine as a parody of Russian poetic posturing, but there is no evidence to suggest this in either the story itself or elsewhere in her writing.<sup>487</sup> Pachmuss'

484 Gippius, *Zhenskoe*, in *Lunnye murav'i*, p.45; 'человек, как и я. Тоже человек, - притом не герой, не больной и не монах.'

485 *ibid.*, p.45; 'Я разговариваю с читателем, а не с читательницей.'

486 *ibid.*, p.64; 'Да женское; да, только и есть на свете две женщины - мама и Оля. Да, мое человеческое, мои мысли, дела, моя работа, - все это мое, а им я отдаю - маме безусловную нежность, Оле - мужское вожделение.'

487 The same 'feminine' features characterize the wife and mother elsewhere in her work, such as in *Vechnaia zhenskost'*, in which women are creatures given to the world but whom it is not given for others to understand.



comment on *Zhenskoe* only refers to a change in Gippius' artistic method in 1912, in which the direct narrative technique is replaced by a 'figurative mode of narration'.<sup>488</sup> It is only the topic, the stylization of femininity, which is figurative, and this has occurred in previous third-person narrator stories. Thus what Pachmuss seems to feel is figurative is the author's narrative identity: Gippius' male 'I' cannot in this case be one with her creative persona because of the obvious fact that Gippius was a woman. The authorial voice is in no way inconsistent with her earlier work, only more unambiguous about the gender of Gippius' 'chelovek'. Pachmuss disregards the similarly opposed male/female identities in the story *Veshnaia zhenskost'* by stating that it concerns 'human understanding in general'.<sup>489</sup>

There is an advantage in dismissing the masculine poetic identity as an irrelevance in Gippius' work. Recognizing the place that gender occupies in Gippius' expression of her world complicates the commonly held view that her philosophy encompassed an androgynous God-figure in which masculine and feminine impulse are fused equally. The human-subject emerges unmistakably as a male image. It is duplicated in God the Father and Son, in Heaven and Earth, in other words duplicated in the definition of the world, while the 'eternal womanhood-motherhood', which Pachmuss describes as Gippius' 'Holy Ghost', is not central to the God-man human identity, but is a projection of his psyche, with a uniquely mystical dimension.

Ignoring the importance of masculine narrative voice in Gippius' work cultivates the same gender inequality in philosophical discourse which is apparent in Gippius' world-view. It defines masculine artistic and spiritual identity as universal. Gippius denied her female self and achieved a status higher than that of any other woman writer in pre-revolutionary Russia. Even given that Gippius' stature was secured by her central position as a poet and a critic within the Symbolist movement,<sup>490</sup> the critics were not indifferent to her gender. Although Gippius' fiercely masculine ego is treated as incidental to her expression,

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488 Pachmuss, *Zinaida Hippius*, p.55.

489 Temira Pachmuss, *Selected Works of Zinaida Hippius*, Urbana, 1972, p.27.

490 Gippius' recognition can be contrasted with the relative obscurity of the male writer Kuzmin. Evelyn Bristol has suggested that Kuzmin's work, though original, has received little attention because there was no real school of symbolist prose. In addition to this, Kuzmin compromised his masculinity by publishing an open brief on behalf of homosexuality (see Bristol's essay on Kuzmin in Terras, *Handbook of Russian Literature*, pp.239-40).



the terms masculine and feminine constantly arise in assessments of her work. Gippius' place in the literary canon was confirmed by the frequent description of her talent as 'masculine'. According to her colleague Zlobin, she played the 'male role' in a 'philosophically creative' sense in her collaboration with Merezhkovskii, because she provided the seed of an idea which he would then nurture and bring to fruition.<sup>491</sup> Women, often relatives, have been recognized as a source of inspiration and practical advice to male writers on other occasions, such as Andreev's wife or Kuprin's mother, but rarely are they described as playing a 'male role'. The epithet is used to distinguish the nature of Gippius' influence as actively creative. Makovskii considers her tendency to be 'masculine' in his comparison of her poetic style with Pushkin's classicism.<sup>492</sup> Mirsky who, like many of her contemporaries, saw her creative output as far superior to that of her husband's, uses contrast rather than comparison:

The most salient feature in all her writing is intellectual power and wit, things rare in a woman. In fact there is very little that is feminine in Mme Hippus.<sup>493</sup>

By attributing an inherent 'masculinity' to Gippius' work, critics may have satisfied the author's desire to be judged 'as a human being', since her own *chelovek* denies the woman in her. However, even Gippius was not entirely able to escape the common censure of women artists for their gender in the evaluation of their work. For Mirsky the 'little feminine' which did remain in her work is 'a tendency to be over subtle and a certain wilfulness - the capriciousness of a brilliant and spoiled coquette.'<sup>494</sup> Adamovich also recalls her 'subtle intellect' as 'confused, feminine, with a peculiar, nonetheless unfeminine, tendency towards scholasticism'.<sup>495</sup> Adamovich notes that Gippius encouraged her scandalous social reputation as a 'witch',<sup>496</sup> although she was never to accept the judgement of 'decadent' that became attached to her work as a result of it.

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491 Zlobin, *op.cit.*, pp.42-43.

492 S. Makovskii, 'Zinaida Gippius' in *Na parnase serebriannogo veka*, Munich, 1962, pp.99-100.

493 D. S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature II: After 1881*, London, 1949, 2nd. ed., p.440.

494 *ibid.*, p.440.

495 Georgii Adamovich, *Odinochestvo i svoboda*, New York, 1955, p.161; 'тонкий, то путанный, женский, со странной, однако, не женской склонностью к схоластике'.

496 *ibid.*, p.161.



One of the most subtle examples of criticism which sifts the positive (masculine) and negative (feminine) sexuality in Gippius' art and intellect is an article on her work by Belyi which appeared in the Symbolist journal *Vesy* ('Scales') in 1908. It is a review of her *Literaturnyi dnevnik* ('Literary Diary'), a collection of Gippius' literary essays written between 1899 and 1907. The writer addresses himself to Gippius' identity as the critic Anton Krainii. Belyi compares the critical genius of Krainii to a light rapier. 'He' overwhelms 'his' opponents, who have not learnt the art of fencing, through skilful handling of the weapon.<sup>497</sup> Krainii's true gender is mentioned at the moment Belyi shifts his position on the writer's talent:

Heavy is the backsword of methodological investigation for the elegant hand of our talented poetess, who hides under the pseudonym of Anton Krayny! What would happen if the opponent threatened with the backsword,(...) the heavy backsword (too elegant for the hand that holds a whistling rapier) would soon fall from her hand.<sup>498</sup>

Belyi continues the duel with the backsword in his own hands, but is careful to mention repeatedly that he will not forget he is dealing with a lady, with a 'beautiful but - alas - weak rapier'.<sup>499</sup> He finally agrees to take up the rapier and 'fence on an equal basis', but the duel is concluded without a battle:

Oh! Mr Krayny, the mask has flown from your face: the respected poetess stands before us. What can a gallant cavalier do other than lower his rapier, or offer his breast to the blows of an elegant hand!<sup>500</sup>

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497 Andrei Belyi, *Arabeski*, Moscow, 1911, p.441. The first paragraph of the review only refers to Anton Krainii in the masculine.

498 *ibid.*, p.442; Тяжел эспадрон методологического исследования для изящной ручки нашей талантливой поэтессы, укрывающейся под псевдонимом Антона Крайнего! Что, если бы противник замахнулся эспадроном,(...) тяжелый эспадрон (слишком тяжелый для изящной ручки, посвистывающей рапирой) выпал бы из ее рук.' Translation of this and all subsequent quotations from Bely's article are from the version in Peterson, trans. and ed., *op.cit.*

499 *ibid.*, p.443; 'прекрасной, но -увы!- слабой рапиры'.

500 *ibid.*, p.443; 'фехтоваться на равных основаниях', p.444; 'Ах, г-н Крайний: маска слетела с вашего лица: перед нами уважаемая поэтесса. Что может сделать галантный кавалер, как не опустить рапиру: как не подставить грудь под удары изящной ручки!'



### 4.3 Women Writers in Finland and Their Reception

The 'masculine' exceptionality of particular women writers maintains the male exclusivity of the literary canon. The image of the rare female talent also fostered the impression that other women's literary efforts represented a uniform, artistically limited phenomenon. This is probably one reason why Gippius was so determined to avoid identification with women writers in Russia. In Finland, despite the greater presence of women among the literary élite, there is evidence of similar prejudices. Suits' assessment of Kallas is clearly an example of this attitude. Laitinen also notes that a number of young women who began publishing at the turn of the century were regarded as a sort of group despite the individual differences in their work.<sup>501</sup> This arbitrary classification of women writers is to be distinguished from the process of exploring the existence or non-existence of a recognizable tendency in women's writing. This process has proven to be part of women's literary tradition. It belongs to women writers' need to identify their own literary heritage. Women writers at the turn of the century, like those before them and after them, often wrote about other women working in the creative arts.<sup>502</sup> They sought to rediscover forgotten women writers and to examine their feminist thematic content, in an attempt to gain historical identity.<sup>503</sup>

In Finland at the turn of the century, women writers established their place in history with relative ease. They were at the fore-front of the country's cultural life. This equal acceptance of women writers, like the early acceptance of women's right to the vote, cannot be explained by any one single factor. Rather, it reflects the freedom of voice allowed women under certain conditions, which were peculiar to Finland at the turn of the century. Many of these conditions come into sharper focus by their direct contrast with the literary life and traditions of Russia.

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501 Laitinen, *Aino Kallas*, p.36.

502 Talvio and Kallas, for example, reviewed the work of Polish and Estonian female poets.

503 Women's writing is periodically 'rediscovered' by feminists in this way. Christine de Pizan's 1405 novel *La cité des dames*, was reviewed in *Soiuz zhenshchin*, 7-8, 1909 as part of a history of literature dealing with women's issues. The novel recently surfaced again in English translation (Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, London, 1983). In both cases the novel's significance was said to be the rediscovery of a lost heritage.



The willingness to take women's cultural contribution seriously was at least partly due to the *naisetkin* ('women too') policy in Finland's search for a national cultural identity.<sup>504</sup> The Finns were above all eager to develop their Finnish-language culture, and in this women were not hampered by the kind of overpowering male literary tradition which existed in Russia. The leading figures of Finnish cultural life were until towards the end of the nineteenth century Swedish-speaking, and the striking surge of cultural activity in the Finnish language in the mid-1880s coincided with the decline of Swedish-language literature's dominance. A parallel can be drawn between the position of women writers in Finland-Swedish literature and that of women writers in Russia in the nineteenth century. After Karl August Tawaststjerna's funeral in 1898, as the younger Mikael Lybeck was returning in a carriage with cultural critic Yrjö Hirn, the latter expressed his feeling that he was now sitting in the company of the whole of the Finland-Swedish literature of the day.<sup>505</sup> The statement ignores the existence of Helena Westermarck, the one woman who received serious critical acclaim, but whose work concentrated on feminist themes.<sup>506</sup>

The similarity exists not only with regard to author status, but also to the thematic treatment of women's role and their characterization. A liberal of the older generation, Westermarck had a strong sympathy for the woman question, and she produced many realistic and sensitive portraits of women. Tawaststjerna's and Lybeck's female portraits are largely one-dimensional, and resemble in many respects the Russian type. In particular Tawaststjerna portrayed many Russian women characters, whom Ben Hellman has described as 'one-sided and cliché'.<sup>507</sup> In the story *Trevano* (1896) Tawaststjerna creates a female 'disciple' type in the mould of the nineteenth-century Russian heroine whose socio-political consciousness is raised through her love for the hero. Lybeck examines the sensual and familial levels of love, as in *Bror och syster* (1915, 'Brother and sister'), as well as sexual relations in conflict with social codes, which Sven Wilner has analyzed as a Slavic theme of obedience and revolt.<sup>508</sup> Aside from 'decadent' themes, Lybeck

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504 See e.g. Chapter Three, in which this attitude is discussed.

505 Kai Laitinen, *Suomen kirjallisuuden historia*, 2nd. ed., Keuruu, 1981, p.258.

506 For an assessment of Helena Westermarck's work and literary position see Merete Mazarella, *Från Fredrika Runeberg till Märta Tikkanen*, Helsinki, 1985, pp.49-73.

507 Ben Hellman, 'Tavaststjerna och Ryssland' (*Meddelanden från stiftelsens för Åbo Akademis Forskningsinstitut*, 44, 1979, p.86) 'ensidig och klichéartad'.

508 Sven Wilner, *Mellan hammaren och städet*, Borgå, 1974, pp.73-94.



examines the conflict between two alternatives for Russia's destiny in *Dynastien Peterburg* (1913, 'The Petersburg Dynasty'). The impasse of police surveillance and self-serving bureaucracy is contrasted with the progressive, honest work represented by a factory-owning family. The drama is set around August, whose uncle, valet to the Tsar, tries to win his loyalty to this 'dynasty' of imperial servants, but August remains faithful to the 'true' dynasty of his family's traditional work. There is an obvious analogy with imperial rule in August's concluding comment on his uncle: 'André is not an ordinary valet.(...) He is an evil principle.'<sup>509</sup> Within this struggle over 'dynasties' women's role is silent and maternal. Etel's 'cheekiness' is the female dimension of the 'rebelliousness' which we learn August admires in people.<sup>510</sup> Somewhere between the occasional women's talk about love and beauty, and the more prominent men's talk about politics and philosophy, August declares his love for Etel. Etel has no lines in the final act, but her presence is essential to the impact of August's choice. The play's closing passionate (*våldsamt*) kiss between them emphasizes her function within the family, and the future, through the continuation of the correct dynasty.

In her examination of the Russian heroine's type, Barbara Heldt has identified a structural constraint on woman's voice peculiar to Russian literature, which contrasts vividly with the experience of women in Finland. The superhuman resilience and sacrificial dedication of the traditional Russian heroine countered the image of the 'superfluous' hero. Heldt's thesis is that this 'strong woman' ideal in the novels of the nineteenth century was too powerful an image for any woman writer to challenge with the depiction of an alternative reality.<sup>511</sup> Women writers were therefore forced to turn to genres other than the prose realist tradition. In their search for their own expression and identity, they primarily chose lyric poetry and autobiography:

The poetic and the autobiographical writings of Russian women bypass the need for perfection within a fictive world; they proceed directly to the world of reality or to a world composed of words arranged with the precise perfection of craft.<sup>512</sup>

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509 Mikael Lybeck, *Dynastien Peterberg*, in *Samlade arbeten*, Helsingfors, 1922, Vol.7, p.144; 'André är inte en vanlig kammartjänare. (...) Han är en ond princip.'

510 *ibid.*, p.13; 'näsvisheten' (attributed to Etel) and 'upprorsinnet' (attributed to August).

511 Heldt, *Terrible Perfection*, pp.12-24.

512 *ibid.*, p.9.



In Finland, the main structures which supported the foundations of Russia's male literary canon were absent for historical reasons. Finnish women writers at the turn of the century were not faced with either an established male Finnish-language realist tradition or an unassailable ideal of female perfection. The ideals of womanhood which dominated in the Swedish-language tradition, such as Runeberg's Hanna of the romantic period, were by the late 1880s ripe for rejection, since they contributed to the idealization of the underprivileged Finnish population. The first generation of Finnish-language realist writers sought to eliminate the idealized image of the Finnish peasant. They concentrated on the harsh realities of an existence in poverty and ignorance.

The willingness to endorse all contributions to the promotion of Finnish culture and independence liberalized the reception of women's writing. Kallas was not the only woman writer whose work was enlisted for a national cause. Canth's depiction of the financial exploitation of women and their lack of civil rights, just as Talvio's portrayal of moral and sexual assault on women, were praised as social studies with a distinctly national message. Jotuni's exposure of women's unspoken experience likewise had a firm basis in class issues central to the question of Finnish independence. L. Onerva who declared her rejection of nationalist themes in her work, suffered more difficult acceptance from the literary circles of the day.<sup>513</sup> It was only later that she was given full credit as the first important female poet and as a major influence in the Symbolist movement.

Although these women were leading literary figures, they did not escape judgement for their gender. The various controversies over their work reveal many of the familiar constructs used to categorize women's writing as an appendix to the canon. L. Onerva makes a bitterly ironic comment on attitudes towards women writers in her story *Jumalien hämärä* (1915, 'The dusk of the gods'):

It would be better to be one of those bourgeois married women writers, that would do it. One's husband would pay the rent and the food-bill, one could work when one wanted, sell a book when one felt like it. No pressure at all. And one's reputation would

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<sup>513</sup> For an assessment of L. Onerva's reception in her day see Eino Krohn, 'L. Onerva - ensimmäinen merkittävä naislyyrikko' (*Suomalainen Suomi*, 1, 1967, pp.35-43) in which he suggests her work was underestimated in her time and analyzes the reasons for this.



grow, of course embellished by one's husband's reputation, of which a woman always owns her share. Women who write and are married at the same time are writers who enjoy a pension.<sup>514</sup>

Apart from the random classification of their work as uniform, and the regular appearance of the terms 'feminine' and 'masculine' as qualitative definers, a number of other gender-based attempts to discredit women writers can be traced in the literary criticism of the period.

L. Onerva in particular found her respectability questioned, in a similar way to Gippius in Russia, for her personal relationships with men. This was compounded by her association with Helsinki's 'bohemian' circles and the *Nuori Suomi* literary group, whose work reflected a decadent influence (albeit greatly subdued in comparison with Russian decadence). Eino Krohn observes that L. Onerva was often subjected to more severe attacks from opposers of the group than its other members, including the controversial Eino Leino.<sup>515</sup> The publication of her first major novel, *Mirdja* (1908), caused scandal with its portrayal of active sexual desire in a woman. The earlier image of Aho's Elli in *Papin rouva*, selfless and submissive, with no hint of sexual self-awareness, remained the acceptable study of female psychology.<sup>516</sup>

Apart from the immorality attributed to the woman who published, the belief in a lack of genuine originality was a tenacious prejudice related to women's writing. Krohn has traced how L.

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514 L. Onerva, *Jumalien hämäreä*, in *Vangittuja Sieluja*, p.46; 'Pitäisi olla porvarillisissa naimisissa oleva naiskirjailija, se vetelisi. Mies maksaisi asunnon, ruuan, saisi tehdä työtä, milloin haluttaisi, myydä kirjan, milloin huvittaisi. Ei pakkoa koskaan. Ja maine kasvaisi, tietysti lisättynä miehen maineella, josta nainen aina omastaa osansa. Kirjailevat naiset, jotka ovat samalla naimisissa, ovat eläkettä nauttivia kirjailijoita.' L. Onerva's own financial and domestic situation was far removed from this (see Reeta Nieminen, *Elämän punainen päivä*, Helsinki, 1982, for biographical details). The story goes on to discuss the commercial pressure on art.

515 Krohn, *op.cit.*, p.36.

516 See e.g. O. E. Tudeer, 'Juhani Aho ja hänen uusin teoksensa' (*Valvoja*, 14, 1894, pp.28-37), a review which states that Elli's characterization in *Papin rouva* subtly penetrates the secrets of woman's psyche and emotional life (p.31). In fact Elli's psychological portrait is not only simplistic but insights into it are rather few and far between, as the novel concentrates much more on the character of Olavi, with whom Elli falls in love. Tudeer's opinion, incidentally, has never been reassessed. Laitinen reiterates the turn-of-the-century view that the novel describes marriage 'seen from a woman's point of view' ('naisen kannalta nähtynä'). Kai Laitinen, *Suomen kirjallisuuden historia*, p.238.



Onerva's friendship with Leino encouraged the early view expressed by the critic Viljo Tarkiainen that she represented:

simply Eino Leino's feminine echo, some kind of epigony of her great contemporary and friend.<sup>517</sup>

Krohn adds that comparative criticism, which noted the influence of Nietzsche and Baudelaire in L. Onerva's work, tended to give the impression that her work is imitative.<sup>518</sup>

The idea that influence means lack of originality in a woman's writing contrasts with the frequent definition of innovative use of similar influence in men's work, such as in Leino's. Canth in particular was accused of unoriginality in the assessments of literary collaboration and literary influence in the evolution of her work. Her collaboration with the director of the newly founded Finnish Theatre, K. Bergbom, provoked the view that her plays could not have been constructed without his advice.<sup>519</sup> Her ideas were said to be taken from Kivi, Ibsen and Tolstoi. Her biographer, Greta von Frenckell Thesleff, was able to establish however that her ideas were her own.<sup>520</sup> Her earliest short stories reflect the same social themes that were to gain prominence in the work of Ibsen and Tolstoi. Thesleff points out that many of her psychological themes also pre-empted Freud's theories. Thematic similarities with other writers stem largely from the nature of social conditions.

The most significant structure which can be observed in the reception of women's writing relates to the interpretation of their work. A revealing comparison can be drawn between the relative interpretations of Talvio's *Aili* and Järnefelt's *Isänmaa*. Both novels deal with the problem of national awakening and duty. They both examine the place of the ego within the unifying concept of the nation (*kansa*), and contrast town and countryside, theory and action, in the individual's search for identity. Järnefelt's novel appeared a few years before Talvio's, which can account for its greater impact as the earliest psychological portrait of conscious nationalism. But that is not

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517 Krohn, *op.cit.*, p.35; 'pelkästään Eino Leinon naisellisena kaikuna, jonkinlaisena suuren aikalaisensa ja ystävänsä epigoonina'.

518 *ibid.*, p.37.

519 Toini Havu has noted by contrast that Bergbom ultimately had an inhibitive, obstructive influence on her art. Toini Havu, 'Minna Canth' in Canth, *Valitut Teokset*, Porvoo, 1965, p.xix.

520 Greta von Frenckell Thesleff, *Minna Canth*, Helsingfors, 1942.



sufficient reason for the fact that Talvio's heroine Aili was seen as a study of feminine inclination to philanthropy, while Järnefelt's hero Heikki rapidly became a classic embodiment of nationalist strivings.<sup>521</sup> Philanthropy had its negative connotations, and Talvio herself even caricatures the ineffectual good will of wealthy ladies in the novel, thus drawing a sharp distinction between her heroine's motivations and those of the misguided and self-gratifying philanthropist.<sup>522</sup> Talvio's correspondence of the time reveals her preoccupations with national concerns. It was precisely these which influenced the topics in her work.<sup>523</sup>

The example of Talvio's *Aili* demonstrates the limited interpretation, based on preconceptions about female psychology, which could occur in the criticism of women's work. This process denies female expression by ignoring the world-view of the author where it does not comply with accepted conventions. Women's writing can be made acceptable by ignoring or misrepresenting certain themes in their work. L. Onerva's rejection of folklore themes, the mark of nationalist sentiment, meant that her work was described as apolitical.<sup>524</sup> This view ignores the strong feminist-political line in her world-view. L. Onerva was emphatic in her appeal to women to unite and participate in the shaping of their own future. A number of L. Onerva's stories also reflect her consciousness of contemporary national political themes, even if she did not use the typical symbolist motifs from Finnish oral tradition to express it. In *Manja Pavlovana* she combines her cult of individualism with the theme of eschatology and rebirth in revolutionary philosophy. In *Jumalien hämärä* artistic identity is studied with direct reference to the role of literature and language in Finnish national ambitions.

The political-philosophical dimension of women's work becomes defined as sociological. Jotuni's play *Vanha koti*, as seen in Chapter

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521 Tyyni Tuulio, *Maila Talvion vuosikymmenet I: 1871-1911*, Porvoo, 1963, p.218.

522 Unlike most male writers, Talvio did not condemn the philanthropist outright. She appears in the sympathetic portrait of Aino in *Pimeän pirtin hävitys*. The negative view of philanthropy in *Aili* reflects Talvio's consciousness of the need for more fundamental, governmental measures to bring about social change.

523 E. J. Ellilä, 'Maila Talvion eräs esitelmämatka ja kertomus Kansan seassa' (*Kirjallisuudentutkijain Seuran vuosikirja*, 9, 1947, pp.23-40). Talvio also wrote her fictional account of national campaigning, *Kansan seassa*, soon after, in 1900.

524 Recent criticism in fact accepts that the modernist rejection of conventional politics must be seen as a political protest in itself. L. Onerva was a precursor of the Finnish *tulenkantajat* ('torch-bearers') group of modernists of the 1920s in many ways, and was recognized as such by them.



Three above, is rich in both revolutionary and feminist politics, but interpretations concentrated on the love theme. Above all, the separatist themes of women's writing, such as the study of isolation - also explored in Chapter Three in the work of Jotuni, L. Onerva, and Canth - received no attention from the critics. In general, criticism which addressed itself to Canth's work failed to take any account of the fundamental currents which run through her work.<sup>525</sup>

Many aspects of Canth's work have been disregarded. Her characters have been analyzed according to principles defining male and female roles of which there is no evidence in her work. One example of this is the first review of *Murtovarkaus* (1883, 'Theft'). The reviewer identifies the main weakness of the play as the fact that the wrong 'boy gets girl'.<sup>526</sup> This reveals the irresistible habit of seeing women as a reward in life's drama, where men are the protagonists. It ignores the fact that in Canth's work woman is the subject of the action and not the object, an identity she often struggles to maintain. Canth also unequivocally rejects the idea of male 'heroic' (or anti-heroic) identity. Canth's characterization has been criticized as one-sided, particularly in that her male characters are devoid of any redeeming features, which makes the female figures' involvement with them implausible.<sup>527</sup> Again this refusal to accept non-heroic male figures in literature obscures Canth's viewpoint. Canth demonstrates that, because of the bias in law, religion and custom, women almost inevitably become victims since they are at the mercy of any man, regardless of his personality. Canth's point is precisely that it is not the Don Juan type - the villain of heroic stature - but all men who are, for no creditable reason, given power over women's lives.

Finally, the separatist element which characterizes one female type in her plays has been dismissed as a Tolstoyan sexual asceticism which resulted from her own unhappy marriage. Her adamant polemic on women's rights demonstrate that socio-political concerns and a world-view based on a future, but at present inviable, equality between the sexes were far more central to the theme of independence in her

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525 For example, the tension between powerlessness and responsibility in women's lives, or the author's rejection of enlightened paternalism as a solution for protecting women's position, points mentioned in Chapter One.

526 V., 'Suomalainen teatteri' (*Valvoja*, 2, 1882, pp.137-40).

527 T., 'Suomalainen teatteri: M. Canth, Työmiehen vaimo' (*Valvoja*, 5, 1885, p.166).



work than personal, romantic disappointment. In her last play, *Anna Liisa*, the theme of self-protection through isolation is no longer expressed through a separate type, but fuses with the identity of the heroine. Anna Liisa's reconciliation to punishment for her crime was simplistically interpreted as an expression of the need for confession and penance with God's guidance.<sup>528</sup> This conclusion fails to recognize that the whole play questions who is responsible for Anna Liisa's crime. It also disregards the oppression Anna Liisa experiences when she is integrated in society on false terms, in contrast to her sense of freedom as an outsider.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

Literary criticism at the turn of the century reflects as firm a preoccupation with the essence of the female being in relation to art, as the political theory of the day does in relation to woman's social role. Writing was regarded as a male occupation not only because it was public but also because it dealt with the intellectual realm of ideas, while the feminine instinct was both private and emotional. The isolated praise addressed to individual women writers is a common device to maintain the literary field as a masculine domain. Appraisals of Gippius' and Kallas' surrogate masculinity in their art did not forget its feminine 'imperfections'. The broader opportunities afforded women by conditions in Finland did not preclude judgements made on the basis of their gender. L. Onerva's novel *Mirdja* was declared to be formidable had it been by a male author, but scandalous by a woman. The relative values and expectations allocated to male and female literary expression, as well as to male and female literary portraits, are determined by the literary canon. Where women's writing acquires 'masculine' status, there is a concomitant attempt to portray its epic-like stature. Leino described Canth as 'the firmest, strongest, most tangible and most relevant intellect in the whole of Finnish-language literature', adding: 'One would almost like to say: the most masculine.'<sup>529</sup> Masculine/epic art is understood as universal. This standard also had to be used to justify the work of a male writer like Chekhov, whose portrayal of

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528 O. Relander, 'Suomalainen teatteri' (*Valvoja*, 16, 1896, p.57).

529 Leino, *Suomalaisia kirjailijoita*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.14, p.234; 'lujin, kovin, kouraantuntuvin ja asiallisin järki kenties koko suomenkielisessä kirjallisuudessa. Tekisi miltei mieli sanoa: miehekkäin.'



women, rejection of heroic voice and impressionistic style confused the establishment. Gippius, herself an adherent of the epic vision, was disturbed by Chekhov's artistic method. She disliked the lack of a positive, life-affirming ideal in his characters, evidence of her search for the heroic.<sup>530</sup> She rationalized his importance to Russian literary history by describing his stories as 'miniatures' which were 'a real epoch, a real revolution in Russian literature'.<sup>531</sup>

Women writers were not measured alongside male writers as fellow artists, but against a scale of established masculinist values in art.

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530 Pachmuss, *Zinaida Hippius*, p.359.

531 *ibid.*, p.359.



## CHAPTER FIVE

## 5 VISIBILITY (I): Reflections of Eternal Femininity

The social and literary assumptions which defined the limitations of woman's role as a writer were rooted in an important aspect of the philosophy of creativity. The understanding of woman's artistic impulse was influenced by concepts of gender in relation to the process of creation. A parallel was drawn between biology and art. Woman's reproductive function and man's role as fecundator are reflected in theories of creativity in the turn-of-the-century literature of Finland and Russia.

In its most literal sense, writers cultivated the concept of mutually exclusive reproductive/generative roles in that women were more often portrayed as performing artists while men were creative artists. It is true that this portrayal also reflected contemporary social realities, but inversely of course, it can be said that social realities reflected widespread contemporary attitudes. Strindberg, for example, is known to have considered that a woman who took up creative work abandoned her sexual nature.<sup>532</sup>

On a more significant symbolic level, the relative biological functions also gave form to the abstract concept of the 'feminine'. The concept of the 'feminine' grew to be one of the most powerful motifs in themes of artistic renewal. As writers considered the historic mission of art as an instrument of rebirth for the nation, the 'feminine' represented a major, and complex, source of inspiration.

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532 Elina Haavio-Mannila, *Suomalainen nainen ja mies: asema ja muuttuvat roolit*, Porvoo, 1968, p.81.



## 5.1 Biology of Creation

### 5.1.1 The Vocational Artist

In both Finnish and Russian literature distinctions are drawn between the performing and the creative arts. Whether as a professional artist or as a type of artistic temperament, woman is predominantly associated with performance. In her role as performer, woman often appears as a sympathetic type. In Russian literature such characters can be contrasted with the satirical caricatures of 'lady writers' mentioned in the last chapter. In Finland, many writers portrayed the female actor, dancer or model, but not the woman writer, despite the reality of women's strong presence in the literary field. In this sense both Russian and Finnish writing shows evidence that these types reflect an attitude of woman's socially acceptable artistic identity.

There are a number of portraits which are psychological studies of the female performing artist. The artistic vocation of the woman who chooses to pursue an acting career receives serious attention in Chekhov's *Chaika* and in Canth's *Papin perhe*. L. Onerva explores the loneliness of the artist in the figure of the female singer in *Raina* (1911). Kuprin's singer 'artiste' in *Iama* is independent in her career and in her ability to make her own judgements. With her experience of the 'real world', she is shown also to have a more positive social influence than philanthropic housewives, as has already been seen in Chapter One. The male artist by contrast, is frequently encountered in both Finnish and Russian fiction as writer, poet, painter, or composer.

Woman's creative productivity in crafts is not recognized as art in this period. Where handicrafts do characterize female portraits, the motif relates to the theme of work and financial remuneration rather than artistic individuality. Crafts traditionally associated with men on the other hand, such as building work, or even military or hunting skills, identify the male protagonist as artist by nature. The male creative act is also given symbolic force in many portraits which are associated not so much with art directly, as with the process of original invention, such as in Andreev's *Mysl'* or Linnankoski's *Ikuinen taistelu* (1903, 'The eternal struggle'). The main protagonists in both plays seek to create an exceptional 'idea'. The thematic focus is on superior intellect and individual will, and reflects the defiant spirit of the artist.



Artistic identity is clearly more meaningful than simply the depiction of a social type. It exposes a pattern of assumptions about male and female creative impulses. The female performing artist is the most straightforward indication that woman's creative role is perceived as a channel for the interpretation, rather than the origination, of an idea. Conversely, negative portraits of male performers also support this view. In Russian literature the male actor is a parallel stereotype to the lady writer. Both are failures in terms of their sex as well as their art. In Kuprin's *Iama*, a male actor who visits the brothel has 'the vulgar, severe and cheap face of a typical alcoholic, a libertine and pettily cruel man'.<sup>533</sup> Not a true Russian, bearing an unlikely name, he has a tendency to launch into drunken, patriotic speeches.<sup>534</sup> He is false both as an individual and in his role within Russian culture. Ridiculed for his affectation and vanity, he appears self-indulgent and perverse. The same unhealthy indulgence characterizes the negative sexual appeal of the male musician in Tolstoi's *Kreitserova sonata*. The musical performance is charged with feminine sexuality implying indecency:

the presto: can one really allow it to be played in a drawing-room full of women in low-cut dresses?<sup>535</sup>

In Finnish literature the character of the male singer seems to represent a significant deviation from the view of performance as an essentially female sphere. Male singers have the approval of their cultural milieu. Heikki in Järnefelt's *Isänmaa*, torn between a career as a singer or a farmer, is sincere and talented. Finland's turn-of-the-century singer type has a different heritage from the ordinary stage performer however. This is most evident in the heroes of symbolist works. Lehtonen, Linnankoski and Leino portray the singer as a wanderer. He is a travelling poet, characterized by qualities which identify him as a shaman, a popular motif amongst Finnish symbolist writers. He is cast in the mould of the exceptional artist, as leader and healer. As such the singer is an artist whose role has national implications.<sup>536</sup> The male

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533 Kuprin, *Iama*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.5, p.85; 'вульгарным, суровым и низменным лицом типичного алкоголика, развратника и мелко жестокого человека.'

534 *ibid.*, p.84.

535 Tolstoi, *Kreitserova sonata*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.12, p.180; 'Разве можно играть в гостиной среди декольтированных дам это престо?'

536 A similar singer type in Russian literature can be found in Blok's symbolist play *Roza i Krest* (1912, *The Rose and the Cross*, 1986). Set in early eighteenth-century France, it casts a minstrel in the role of artist-prophet. The play was conceived around



singer is an intrinsically Finnish, creative hero in whose role art is thematically linked to questions of national identity and national struggle. The dilemma of Järnefelt's hero is how best to serve his country. Even Canth's male singer in *Laulaja*, of whom the author clearly disapproves, is used to raise the question of national loyalties.

The professional performer also highlights changing cultural values. In Finland, the tradition of male oral poetry became a positive symbol of national identity, but modern urban culture could be a corrupting influence. It is not the nature of the art that is at fault but the narcissism of the modern performer. Similarly, the conditions of performance, like the musical programme at the society soirée in Tolstoi's novel, can devalue true art.<sup>537</sup> Performance becomes mere posturing, as in the case of the sentimental male poet in Gippius' *Goluboe nebo*, who has no talent, only a taste for the melodramatic.<sup>538</sup> In these cases art is not genuine creativity, but simply an exhibition of the artist's emotions. Art of this kind is false because it is not conscious of its purpose within the historical perspective of cultural and political developments.

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French troubadour culture, emphasizing the element of poetic creation, rather than performance, in song. The artist is the bearer of a mystical message as well as the embodiment of cultural tradition, both of which are significant to the issue of national loyalty raised in the play.

537 Tolstoi's views of the banality, purposeless and destructiveness of most types of performance, as expressed in *Kreitserova sonata*, are outlined at length in his well-known critique of contemporary culture *Chto takoe iskusstvo?* (1898, *What is art?*, 1930). See, for example, the first chapter in which he comments on the degenerate nature of women performing ballet, a spectacle which is offensive to the educated and incomprehensible to the uneducated (in *op.cit.*, Vol.15, p.45).

538 Gippius, *Goluboe nebo*, in *Novye liudi*, p.153. The poet reads 'in a funereal voice something about the untimely death of the poet' ('убытым голосом что-то о ранней смерти поэта').



### 5.1.2 The Performer's Roles: Interpretation and Exhibition

Artist types in Finnish and Russian literature demonstrate that performance is seen as woman's vocational creative expression. Woman's artistic characterization is not limited to the portrayal of a professional or social type. Woman too plays a key role in the shaping of the nation's political-aesthetic destiny. Within this phenomenon, there are two relevant aspects of the feminine artistic identity. The first relates to woman's interpretive role, and the second to woman's physical exhibition, inherent in the very nature of performance.

The interpretive identity has its roots in the application of woman's biological role as a mother to theories of aesthetic response. Woman is not able to initiate the 'word', but she does reproduce it through performance. Woman's special function within this process also allows her a role at the source of creation. Woman becomes identified with nature. She represents the primordial background to man's dynamic existence. Her procreative instinct places her in tune with universal continuity. This suggests her intuition of past or other worlds, with which man, whose creative function originates in himself, has no direct contact. Woman symbolizes the dawn of creation. In her creative power and her relationship to man she evokes the paradoxical image of Eve. She marks the 'fall' into knowledge and offers eventual hope of unity with divine purpose. She is instrumental in assisting man into the perilous sphere of the imagination.

As with Eve and Adam, the difficult acceptance of knowledge often involves the concretization of sexuality. In both Andreev's *Chërnye maski* (1910, *The Black Maskers*, 1915) and Linnankoski's *Ikuinen taistelu*, the passions of the ego are projected as seductive and deceptive creatures in human, female form. Eve, with her nocturnal mirror image in the figure of Lilith, typifies many of the mystical women who lead men onto a supra-real plane in the work of Sologub. Sologub's frequently ambivalent 'white mother' is created by the imagination of his child protagonists. She is represented by the sun as well as the image of the serpent, signifying both life-force and danger in the acquisition of knowledge. The white/black female role in the artist's creativity is explored in the figure of Queen Ortruda, who inhabits the fantasy world of the protagonist, a school-teacher endowed with magic



powers, in Sologub's trilogy *Tvorimaia Legenda* (1907-13, *The Created Legend*, 1979).

Transition to the world of magic or dream in Sologub requires the presence of the witch-like mother. She is at the source of the creation of original idea. This dimension of woman in the cosmic structure is powerfully present in the works of Linnankoski. In his play *Ikuinen taistelu*, which retells the myth of Cain and Abel, the creative act is part of the struggle between good and evil. In an early version of the play, Cain believes he has 'seen a strange glint in mother's eye: doubt, suspicion - suppressed anguish'.<sup>539</sup> This is a hint of the knowledge Eve brought, and which marks Cain. Ada now takes on Eve's creative urge. She craves a more fulfilling destiny than the monotony of their harmonious existence, and experiences Cain's restlessness. Their relationship to creation remains very different however. In Act 2, Cain invents fire, an act which for him means 'to be a true hero' by which 'the individual does not die either', as his act will live on after him.<sup>540</sup> He insists that he is the initiator of his action, although Abel claims that he simply executed a God-given idea. Ada, later in Act 4, discovers her creative urge in the child she will bear. The child, which Ada suggests will be a boy, brings the hope of a new beginning.<sup>541</sup> Cain, with his fire and his subsequent act of murder, asserts his capacity for self-generated invention. He attempts to recreate the original act of God, while in motherhood Ada will recreate Cain.

Just as in her interpretive role of performer, so in her Eve-like presence in the cosmic cycle of existence, woman's creative role is not that of originator, though she reflects the original idea. Rather, she recreates the potential for invention by giving life to the artist. Likewise in the exposure inherent in performance, woman's physical being becomes imbued with creative significance which differs from the male role. It is in relation to music that woman's physical role is most apparent. Music was central to Symbolist aesthetics.<sup>542</sup> Music relates not

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539 This section of the play, later omitted, is quoted in Aarne Anttila, *Johannes Linnankoski: Ikuinen taistelu*, Porvoo, 1922, p.87; 'nähty äidin silmässä oudon lieskan: epäilystä, epävarmuutta - tukehutettua tuskaa'.

540 Linnankoski, *Ikuinen taistelu*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.1, p.115; 'olla moinen sankari', 'ja ihminen ei kuolekkaan.'

541 *ibid.*, p.176.

542 Although Symbolist writers strove to produce a synthesis of the arts, music came to dominate, particularly in Russia. See Gerald Janecek, *The Look of Russian Literature: Avant-Garde Visual Experiments 1900-1930*, Princeton, 1984, pp.4-5. The author explains that musical rhythms influenced the structure of Symbolist verse while visual effect



only to individual artistic expression, but also to cultural national awareness in both Finnish and Russian literature. Woman's relationship to music contrasts with man's in that while men are poets with a musical quality, women evoke the spirit of dance, both literally and metaphorically. It is the visual effect which is emphasized. The motif of women dancing is extensively used in the work of Leino and Blok to suggest the stimulation of the senses. In Lehtonen's *Mataleena*, the heroine expresses her vitality through dance, and her dancing incites the men around her. Andreev's play *Ekaterina Ivanovna* combines the abstract concept of dance as art with the earthly manifestation of the dancer.

Ekaterina's role as a symbol of artistic expression is clearly revealed in her relationship with Koromyslov, the society painter. Ekaterina's seducer, Mentikov, has been seen as her fundamental antagonist.<sup>543</sup> This interpretation concentrates the meaning of the play in the theme of social hypocrisy, as a criticism of moral conventions which condone Mentikov's libertinism at the expense of feminine integrity in love. Koromyslov's role in Ekaterina's downfall should not be underestimated however, as in this lies the play's discussion of art. In Act 1, Aleksei suspects Koromyslov, rather than Mentikov, of adulterous relations with Ekaterina. This is not accidental. Aleksei, the brother of Ekaterina's husband, is deeply in love with her. Although his suspicions are incorrect, his instinct is accurate. It will be Koromyslov whose actions are decisive in Ekaterina's destruction.

The actual affair between Ekaterina and Mentikov, as well as Ekaterina's relationship with her husband, Georgii, repeatedly evoke the impression of force. She is a creature 'raped' by the men around her. Eye-symbolism is used more than once to express her spiritual death after Georgii tries to shoot her at the end of Act 1.<sup>544</sup> Later there is a significant exchange between Georgii and Koromyslov about her eyes:

Georgii Dmitrievich: Yes. Have you seen her eyes?  
Koromyslov: Are they painted?

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became the hallmark of the later Futurists. As an example Janecek cites Belyi, the Symbolist who did most to alter the visual look of the page. Belyi hoped to create aural rather than visual effects (pp.63-65).

543 Woodward, *op.cit.*, pp.233-34.

544 Andreev, *Ekaterina Ivanovna*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol.15, e.g. p.225 (she covers her eyes), or p.234, (Georgii refers to her eyes when he talks of her adultery).



Georgii Dmitrievich: Oh no, not that. It is as if she were blind.<sup>545</sup>

Georgii misses, and the shooting is a clear sexual metaphor illustrating the inadequacy of his virility. Aleksei tells him that he is no 'sportsman', does not know how to shoot and therefore should not try.<sup>546</sup> Georgii comments on Aleksei's contrasting athleticism several times.<sup>547</sup> Aleksei's athletic friend Fomin poses the question: 'perhaps there is no need to shoot?' to which the disturbed Georgii answers 'Then what are revolvers for?'<sup>548</sup>

The ensuing bonds which develop between Mentikov, Aleksei and Koromyslov represent a conspiracy of violence towards Ekaterina, but it is above all the society which tolerates a Koromyslov which is at fault. This is a society which belittles and exploits the artistic spirit of dance in Ekaterina. There is a contrast between Ekaterina's and the men's cultural activities. When Ekaterina seeks to impress them with music, men turn away and indulge in the prosaic activity of smoking cigarettes.<sup>549</sup>

Koromyslov is a false artist. In Act 1, Aleksei describes him as a man 'who hates dreams'.<sup>550</sup> Koromyslov's art work is discussed in terms of monetary transactions, and later he feels he cannot do artistic justice to Liza's portrait, she being the as yet 'unspoilt' muse in the play. Ekaterina appeals to Koromyslov as her only possible saviour. Not only does he reject her, but he furthers her exploitation, stating that she exudes 'the temptation of the devil, and in your eyes...', and 'you are beginning to degenerate - in dream'.<sup>551</sup> For Koromyslov, it is her excess of femininity which places her in another, incomprehensible world.<sup>552</sup> Ekaterina faints when he and Mentikov together (a union between art and trade) suggest painting and photographing her, an indication of the burden of this physical exploitation. She perceives that Koromyslov's artistic priorities are not spiritual but commercial, and says to him: 'for

545 *ibid.*, p.300; '-Г.Д.: Да. Ты видел ее глаза? -К.: Подкрашенные? -Г.Д.: Ах, не то! Она - как слепая.'

546 *ibid.*, p.226.

547 *ibid.*, e.g. pp.226, 230, 238.

548 *ibid.*, p.239; 'А может-быть, и совсем не надо стрелять?', 'А зачем же тогда делают револьверы?'

549 *ibid.*, e.g. p.272 (while Ekaterina plays the piano off-stage), and p.324 (smoking concludes the play after Ekaterina's dance).

550 *ibid.*, p.237; 'который ненавидит сон'.

551 *ibid.*, p.290; 'какой-то дьявольский соблазн, и в твоих глазах...', 'начинаете развратничать - во сне.'

552 *ibid.*, p.299.



you nothing is sacred.'<sup>553</sup> Koromyslov decides to paint her half-naked as Salome, and at the end of the play, at Koromyslov's suggestion, she is forced to perform Salome's dance.<sup>554</sup> Koromyslov, expresses the cynical view that 'art loves sacrifices'.<sup>555</sup> This is no remark on the sacrifice of the artist, but on the exploitation of the subject (victim). He sees Ekaterina as a 'corpse'.<sup>556</sup> The assault on Ekaterina's body, at its worst in Koromyslov's indifferent use of her sexually and artistically, is a metaphor for the degeneracy of artistic vision in her environment.

The projected visibility of woman's artistic expression in dance is reinforced by the concept of female beauty. As an ideal of physical perfection, woman's role in art becomes focused on her image. Ekaterina wonders if the crime for which she suffers is her beauty.<sup>557</sup> As Salome, she is bewildered by her nakedness in the presence of men.<sup>558</sup> The physical exhibition of the dance form invokes female sexuality. There is also a sexual dimension to many female musical mystics whose portraits are not characterized by dance, as in Andreev's muse of revolution, Musia, in *O semi poveshennykh*. The condemned Musia, whose thoughts seek form in music, is bride-like at her death. At her execution she chooses the company of the virile gypsy, who kisses her fervently and leads her by the hand as they both go to be hanged. In L. Onerva's *Mirdja*, music is at the source of the heroine's psychological portrait, which is intertwined with the theme of sexual identity. Towards the end of Lehtonen's *Mataleena*, as the hero hears the song of the mad, the story's mystical forest spirit appears as a naked woman whose 'breast pounded voluptuously'.<sup>559</sup>

The consciousness of the female form reflects an awareness of feminine sexuality within the artistic soul. Alongside dance, the perfection of the Grecian female statue, as well as the exotic sensuality of the prostitute, termed 'hetara' or 'geisha', are symbols of feminine beauty which are related to themes of art. In Kuprin's story *Psikhea* (1892, 'Psyche'), a sculptor seeks to reproduce a statue of Psyche as he imagined her in a dream. Sologub expresses the search for beauty as

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553 *ibid.*, p.286; 'для вас нет ничего святого.'

554 *ibid.*, p.312.

555 *ibid.*, p.305; 'искусство любит жертвы'.

556 *ibid.*, p.290; 'труп'.

557 *ibid.*, p.251; 'разве я виновата, что я...красива.'

558 *ibid.*, p.321.

559 Joel Lehtonen, *Mataleena*, in *Kootut teokset*, Helsinki, 1931-35, Vol.2, p.373; 'povi hekumanväkevänä paisui'.



inspiration with his earthly, vital figure of Eve or his ethereal, other-worldly figure of Lilith. Feminine beauty is the driving force behind Linnankoski's unequivocal artists, as in *Laulu tulipunaisesta kukasta* (1905, *The Song of the Blood-Red Flower*, 1920), in the exotic images of the hero's many lovers in this world, and in the delicate memory of his dead sister on an alternative plane. The symbolic motif of the feminine form in relation to art is widespread in both Finnish and Russian writing. An ideal of beauty, woman's essential aesthetic identity is defined as that of the artist's muse.

The muse relates not simply to the abstraction of inspiration but combines the force of religious and philosophical spirituality, which has both national and universal significance. The muse exemplifies the feminine force in the nation's aesthetic development. Her role is revelatory. Her existence imbues the artist and his work with cosmic importance. Eternally beautiful, she embodies ideals of femininity which are created in myth. Her earthly image in classical sculpture or legendary heroines are mere reflections of her true form however. Her essential image exists on a plane beyond that of earthly reality and takes its model in both Finland and Russia in spiritual belief. She combines the religious and pagan iconography of ideal femininity in the cult of the Virgin Mary, with an unspecified, eternal spirit of femininity intrinsic to the universal order.

## 5.2 The Nature and Role of the Muse

The role of the muse in the literature of the turn of the century is most explicit in the work of two of the foremost figures of symbolist writing, Aleksandr Blok in Russia, and Eino Leino in Finland. The muse's significance lies in her relationship to the artist. For both writers she exists therefore on a very individualistic thematic level, but in both Leino's and Blok's work, she is also representative of the muse type of the day. Her image shows the influence of the respective countries' religious-cultural traditions as well as by their contemporary symbolist aesthetics.



### 5.2.1 Background to the Image of the Muse

Unlike Catholicism or Orthodoxy, the Protestant tradition displays a reluctance to create a unequivocal cult of a female figure.<sup>560</sup> Catholicism worships the biblical figure of the Holy Virgin in mariology. In sophiology, the Orthodox faith created a female personification of Divine Wisdom as a manifestation of God. Protestant theology's preoccupation with the nature and role of the feminine being in the religious system avoids concentration on a model as such, but draws on more generalized ideas about male and female attributes based on biblical teachings.<sup>561</sup> This relative difference is reflected in Russian Orthodoxy and Finnish Lutheranism. It is also observable in the philosophical reinterpretations of woman's nature which emerged at the turn of the century.

Although knowledge of the cult of the Virgin Mary did reach Finland in the Middle Ages, conveyed by Catholic monks, the Reformation and Lutheran practice eliminated or at least suppressed the devotion of Mary. Luther's own views drew on a variety of biblical and medieval notions about woman's place. The substance of his conclusions was that male and female are equal before God, yet woman is by virtue of her procreative role subordinate to man.<sup>562</sup> In Finnish oral tradition, the tale of the Virgin Mary localizes her figure. She appears in a variety of earthly circumstances and is referred to by a variety of names.<sup>563</sup> Likewise, in Leino's adaptation of the theme of the tale, she is equally well Marjatta or Aino. Finnish tradition is not so concerned with the precise, mythical identification of her image, but cultivates a type of womanhood which recalls the feminine perfection exemplified by the Virgin Mary. Through her manifestation to the artist, the transformation to divine unity is achieved.

The Russian heritage, by contrast, identifies a fixed feminine principle in divinity itself. Stemming from the Greek Orthodox understanding of Holy Sophia as the divine wisdom manifested in

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560 For a comparison of the various images see George H. Tavard, *Woman in Christian Tradition*, Notre Dame, 1973.

561 *ibid.*, pp.185-86.

562 *ibid.*, p.172.

563 Tarkiainen, *op.cit.*, p.133. As the author points out she is referred to by the Finnish equivalent of Mary, 'Marjatta', as well as by various other identifiers which emphasize the Finnish context, such as 'Luonnotar' (Maid of nature), 'Lemmetar' (Maid of love) or simply as a local servant girl or shepherdess.



Christ, Russian belief developed a metaphor of male-female polarity in divinity which was absent from Greek tradition. While Greek theology was not concerned with investigating the combination of 'energy' and 'essence' as distinct feminine and masculine aspects of God, Russian theology directly raised the question of the female dimension of the divinity.<sup>564</sup> In churches dedicated to the Holy Sophia the iconography of the Virgin Mary was used to evoke the femininity of Sophia.<sup>565</sup> Similarly the feminine principle developed by Solovëv, Blok, and others in Russia, identify her unequivocally as the personality of Sophia. The influence of folklore imagery in Blok's work does not alter this identity. Certain descriptive and contextual motifs may alter her aspect, but she remains recognizable as Sophia. The eternal feminine in the Russian tradition is an icon of ideal womanhood which evokes the image of perfection of the Virgin Mary. Her role within creation lies in the union expressed by the concept of Divine Wisdom existing in God.

An important facet of the muse in both Finnish and Russian writing is that her manifestation, expressing male-female unity, is fundamentally related to the national spirit. This is also a facet of the feminine in theology in that the bride of Christ, always characterized by the beauty of the Virgin, can be Jerusalem or Israel personified.<sup>566</sup> Leino relies on visions of womanhood from oral tradition to express the national historic role of the artist. In general, the spirit of a Finnish revolutionary creativity in literature takes its model from non-Christian, folk images which identify the artist as shaman. The shaman is a communicant with all creation and divinities, intrinsically Finnish in his personality. His magic powers, state of ecstasy and exceptional talent parallel the role of the symbolist artist, in touch with the Platonic otherworld of pure and beautiful reality. Russian Symbolism also combines these universal, national and artistic aspirations of rebirth. The concept of Russia itself is identified as the third of Blok's beloved 'mystical mistresses'.<sup>567</sup> Blok himself described the image of Russia which emerges in his later work as a reflection of the original, correct

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564 Tavad, *op.cit.*, pp.158.

565 *ibid.*, p.158.

566 Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Mary: The Feminine Face of the Church*, London, 1979, pp.17-18.

567 James Forsyth, *Listening to the Wind*, Oxford, 1977, p.73. Forsyth identifies the first mistress as the initial bringer of light, Sophia, modelled on Blok's wife Liubov Mendeleeva, and the second as the contrasting dark maiden/prostitute, modelled on the actress Volokhova.



muse of Sophia.<sup>568</sup> For Blok, as for other Symbolists, Sophia as the essence of artistic and national consciousness identifies the artist as Christ, who is the manifestation of the divine wisdom. The opposition of Shaman in Finland and Christ in Russia reflects not only the cultural heritage of the two countries but the different perspective in the historic role of the artist. In the figure of Christ, the universal mission of Russian literature is emphasized, while in the character of the shaman, the importance of cultural nationalism in literature is advanced.

### 5.2.2 Beauty and Rebirth in the Muse

The muse is identified by her beauty. Beauty and the feminine are fundamental concepts of symbolist aesthetics, central to religious-philosophical and artistic ideals.<sup>569</sup> Blok's image of eternal femininity was initially influenced by Vladimir Solovëv's vision of Sophia the Divine Wisdom.<sup>570</sup> Solovëv's conceptualization had a significant impact on Blok partly because he himself had had similar visions.<sup>571</sup> Solovëv saw Sophia as the World Soul, ideal humanity, in captivity. Blok also gave his muse this mystical dimension. In this guise her most essential feature is her sadness, evocative of her concern for earthly humanity. The muse he extols in his earliest writing and in his famous verses to the 'Beautiful Lady' further evokes the possibility of positive, cosmic unity through erotic love. In her beauty, she captures the elements of everlasting perfection which are characteristic of the Virgin Mary. Her image is also enhanced by the typical symbolist motifs of music, sign of purest creation, and light, sign of a new age. She is accompanied by the musical sounds of surrounding natural phenomena, and her visual impression is that of the dawn. She is a symbol of rebirth through divine beauty.

Leino's muse underwent similar development in his early work. Her image is first inspired by nature, linked to pantheistic religiosity, and is then fused with the idea of earthly love.<sup>572</sup> She evokes the fulfilment

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568 *ibid.*, p.73.

569 See e.g. Ellis, *Russkie simvolisty*, Moscow, 1910, especially pp.319-36.

570 For a brief interpretation of the source and meaning of Solovëv's teachings about Sophia at the turn of the century see Nikolai Berdiaev, *Russkaia ideia: Osnovanye problemy russkoi mysli XIX veka i nachala XX veka*, Paris, 1946, pp.176-81.

571 Konstantin Mochulsky, *Aleksandr Blok*, trans. Doris V. Johnson, Detroit, 1983 (1948), pp.44-46.

572 V. Tarkianen, *op.cit.*, p.147.



of beauty and creation, symbolized in the atmosphere and colours of the dawn. Leino's treatment of the theme of the Virgin Mary was initially inspired by her image as it appears in the *Kalevala* and the *Kanteletar*, compilations based on oral poetry collected by Elias Lönnrot in the spirit of romanticism in the first half of the nineteenth century. Leino's Marjatta is at first identified by her quality of *mater dolorosa* in his poetry. She then appears as a vision of his beloved, whom he worships and whose proximity affords him joy. The focus of his adoration becomes her beauty, with Leino himself as a 'troubadour'. Her function as muse is explicitly related both to her perfect feminine beauty and to her role within creation.

In both Leino's and Blok's work, the muse also eventually develops characteristics of her dark side. This suggests the authors' increasing consciousness of the psychological strain of the role of artist. The sinister features of the muse's characterization are sharpest in the aftermath of the 1905 revolution. They express the chaotic forces of the imagination, and the inevitability of destruction in the process of rebirth.

After the unrest of 1905, Blok and Leino begin to place an emphasis on drama as the period's ideal genre for achieving cultural renewal. Their letters and articles reveal that their interpretation of art combined personal goals with national ideals.<sup>573</sup> Both formulated theories about the theatre of the future.<sup>574</sup> As artists, they sought to retain the individualist vision of their own poetic genre in drama. In 1906, Blok opposed contemporary theatre '*in the name of the tonal lyricism of my own play*'.<sup>575</sup> At the same time, their theory of drama was tied to their view of their respective historic roles as artists in the development of Russian and Finnish culture.<sup>576</sup> Neither author

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573 See Leino, *Realismin loppu ja uus-romanttinen kirjallisuutemme* ('The end of Realism and our Neo-Romantic literature') in *op.cit.*, Vol.14, pp.308-30 written in 1909, and Aleksandr Blok, *O sovremennom sostoianii russkogo simvolizma* ('On the present condition of Russian Symbolism'), in *Sobranie sochinenii*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1963, Vol.5, pp.425-37, written in 1910.

574 See e.g. Blok's article *O teatre* ('On the theatre') of 1908, and Leino's four-part article *Näytelmän tekotapa* ('The making of a play') of 1910-11. Leino's concept of 'sacred drama' has been explored in Tuomas Tarkiainen, *Eino Leinon pyhä draama*, 1975 (unpublished dissertation submitted to the University of Helsinki).

575 Blok, *Pis'ma 1898-1921*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.8, p.169; '*во имя звонкой лирики своей пьесы*'. (Italics in original.) Later, he was to become disillusioned with the overpowering lyrical quality of his own drama (Mochulsky, *op.cit.*, p.216).

576 Both artists are conscious of their role as controversial, yet chosen. For Blok, it is 'we - the few cognoscenti, the Symbolists' who form the new school of Russian art (Blok,



expressed great faith in the level or direction of the established theatre of his country.<sup>577</sup> They believed in the revitalising potential of the 'new theatre' represented, for example, by Ibsen or Björnson. Both Leino and Blok refer to the 'stylization' of this art form, a term which referred to the new features of the symbolist theatre.<sup>578</sup> Their lyric drama became the channel for renewing individualistic expression, the national spirit and art itself.

### 5.2.3 Aleksandr Blok

Blok explicitly identified his muse in the three dramas *Balaganchik* (1906, *The Puppet Show*, 1986), *Korol' na ploshchadi* (1906, 'The king on the square') and *Neznakomka* (1906, 'The unknown woman'). He explained that in each play 'beautiful life is the incarnation of the image of Eternal Femininity.'<sup>579</sup> The definition is typical of the Sophia of Solovëv and his followers. Representing the beauty of life towards which the hero strives, the female protagonists embody freedom and light. Much of the imagery in their physical description is drawn from Blok's conceptualization of the Beautiful Lady. The figure of Columbine in *Balaganchik* displays familiar signs of Blok's early visions of ideal femininity. She is 'a bride of light',<sup>580</sup> 'a girl of rare beauty; her face is simple and calm and of a matt whiteness. She is dressed in white.'<sup>581</sup>

The muse's beauty also reflects a mystical quality which relates it to the supra-real plane existing in the human mind. This is the realm of the imagination, where the mental transformation of sleep, dream, fantasy, memory or madness enables the perception of a beauty more absolute than that which might be encountered in this world. In *Korol' na ploshchadi* the Builder's Daughter, dark-haired with a face bright like

О современном состоянии русского символизма, in *op.cit.*, Vol.5, p.426, 'мы: немногие знающие, символисты'). Leino, in defiance of the critics, stated 'they will see who is stronger, me or Finland' (Leino, *Kirjeet I: Freya Schoultzille*, ed. Aarre M. Peltonen, Helsinki, 1961, p.176; 'saavat nähdä kumpi on voimakkaampi, minäkö vai Suomi').

577 Blok, *Pis'ma*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.8, pp.169-71. Leino, *Kirjeet IV: Aino Kallakselle, ystäville ja yhteisölle*, ed. Aarre M. Peltonen, Helsinki, 1962, p.95.

578 Blok, *O teatre*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.5, p.261, where he talks of 'стилизация' of the theatre. Leino, *ibid.*, p.95, where he calls new drama 'tyylittely'.

579 Blok, *Predislovie*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.434; 'прекрасная жизнь есть воплощение образа Вечной Женственности.'

580 *ibid.*, p.434; 'светлая невеста'.

581 Blok, *Balaganchik*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.12; 'необыкновенно красивая девушка с простым и тихим лицом матовой белизны. Она в белом.'



the day,<sup>582</sup> is 'a beautiful woman conjuring biblical dream',<sup>583</sup> 'insane fantasy, senselessness', 'beauty forgotten',<sup>584</sup> and finally in the words of the play's poet a 'celestial rose'.<sup>585</sup> In *Neznakomka*, 'dazzling'<sup>586</sup> beauty characterizes the Unknown Woman, a fallen star who appears only to vanish again.<sup>587</sup>

Despite her revelatory nature, the artist's relationship to the muse is ambivalent. The muse has a sinister side which expresses the struggle in the poet's soul. The symbol of virginity/death conveyed by the pun on the braid/scythe (*kosa*) on Columbine's back reflects the tragic experience of the artist. Blok's own role within Russia's political-aesthetic development began increasingly to preoccupy him after 1905. As Nils Åke Nilsson has put it:

Blok lived through Russia's crisis as a personal crisis, as individual, as poet, and as representative of a privileged class.<sup>588</sup>

In an article of February 1909 entitled *Dusha pisatelja* ('The soul of the writer') Blok stated:

The writer's task is a difficult, terrible, insidious fate. Especially in the Russia of our time.(...) the only real justification for the writer is as the voice of the public, (...) not even the voice, but as if the breath of the nation's soul.<sup>589</sup>

This theme emerges strongly in his plays. The artist is identified as prophet or saviour. His special ability to perceive beauty determines his role within the historic universal and national mission. The muse's part in this is indispensable. Both *Korol' na ploshchadi* and *Neznakomka* reveal the muse's significance as the spirit of Russia, in which the element of revolutionary chaos is present.

582 Blok, *Korol' na ploshchadi*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.53.

583 Blok, *Predislovie*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.434; 'красавица лелеющая библейскую мечту'.

584 Blok, *Korol' na ploshchadi*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.30; 'безумной фантазии, нелепости', 'прекрасное, что было забыто'.

585 *ibid.*, p.59; 'небесная роза'.

586 Blok, *Neznakomka*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.87, 'ослепительна'.

587 Blok, *Predislovie*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.434.

588 Nils Åke Nilsson, *Rysk litteratur: från Tjechov till Solsjenitsyn*, Stockholm, 1973, p.49.

589 Blok, *Dusha pisatelja*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.5, p.367; 'Писательская судьба - трудная, жуткая, коварная судьба. В наше время в России - особенно(...) единственное верное оправдание для писателя - голос публики, (...) даже не голос, а как бы легкое дуновение душу народной.'



Closest to the theme of revolution is the *Korol' na ploshchadi*. Its muse, the Builder's Daughter, calls herself 'the daughter of the mad crowd', and insists that she is not a queen, as the poet claims.<sup>590</sup> In effect she is both, embodying the dualities of chaos and renewed order, of communal culture and individual artistic spirit. She has a separate relationship to the crowd and to the poet. She remains the image of the dawn. At the end of the play, her 'face illumined' amid celestial rose petals, she beckons the poet to his freedom.<sup>591</sup> In the final act, set at night, she suddenly appears beside the rebellious 'figure clad in black', and the crowd see her as both 'saint' and 'destruction'.<sup>592</sup> In her final monologue, she addresses the giant effigy of the King on the square: 'your people gave me your power over themselves.'<sup>593</sup> She offers her virgin body to infuse her own youth into the ancient wisdom of King and Father. The poet joins her and rises towards the sky, towards the Father. At the same time, the 'dark' element of the crowd once again appears to incite the restless mob to rebel, claiming:

Sound Mind has abandoned you! See, you are without food and without blood, you are in the power of Rumours.<sup>594</sup>

The play reflects the ambivalent feelings of the author towards the 1905 revolution. It still contains hope in the dawn-like force of renewal in the artist's muse. She is the spirit of true culture and faith. But the play also expresses disillusion with the idea of a 'liberating destruction'<sup>595</sup> emitting from the crowd in response to the dark spirit, rather than to the celestial queen.

The later of the two dramas, *Neznakomka*, is less directly concerned with rebellion. It concentrates on the direction of Russian art. The spirit of Russian oral tradition is evoked in the play. Blok had been studying Russian spells and incantations.<sup>596</sup> Motifs from these influence

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590 Blok, *Korol' na ploshchadi*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.54; 'дочь безумной толпы'.

591 *ibid.*, p.59; 'лицо озарено'.

592 *ibid.*, p.56; 'святая', 'защита'.

593 *ibid.*, p.57; 'твой народ передал мне твою власть над собою.'

594 *ibid.*, p.58; 'Здравый Смысл покинул вас! Смотрите, вы без пищи и без крова, вы во власти Слухов.'

595 *ibid.*, p.28. The problem is presented in Act 1 when an unnamed member of the crowd asks: 'do you believe destruction is liberating?' ('веришь ли ты, что разрушение освободительно?').

596 Mochulsky, *op.cit.*, pp.146-47. Mochulsky notes that these aspects of Russian oral tradition influenced Blok's image of a dark, demonic Russia in his poems of the same period.



the gloomy atmosphere of the play and the dark, magical qualities of the Unknown Woman. It also elaborates the ideas expressed in Blok's short 'dialogue', *O liubvi, poezii i gosudarstvennoi sluzhbe* (1906, 'On love, poetry and national service'). The dialogue is a discussion on contemporary literature between a Poet and a Clown. The Poet believes: 'Literature must be our daily bread!'<sup>597</sup> He himself writes 'civic poetry', 'revealing poetry', and feels literature must be 'social', although, as he says to the Clown: 'you are a Symbolist! And even I am no admirer of Gor'kii.'<sup>598</sup>

In Blok's 'dialogue', the Clown points out that, preoccupied with words, the Poet has forgotten his 'lady' (дама). In *Neznakomka*, a similar danger occurs. The presence of the astral muse infuses mystical reality into the ordinary world of absurd banality. The Poet, however, fails to acknowledge her. He allows the moment of inspiration to pass. By the end of the play, the discussion is dominated by impressions of false, consumer art, conveying Blok's dissatisfaction with the decadent elements prevailing in Russian Symbolism.

The Poet knows that, in the moment of ecstasy, the image of the beautiful Unknown Woman will appear from among a crowd of other faces.<sup>599</sup> However, when she appears, the Poet is drunk and asleep. Only his dream double is present, all blue from having stared at the sky too long. The Blue Figure claims he is the poet who writes only of her, yet he has not the courage to say her name or touch her. He knows only the words of 'secrets and ceremonial speeches'.<sup>600</sup> He cannot give her the 'earthly' words she seeks.<sup>601</sup> The conversation with the double presents the problem of Symbolism's danger of divorcing itself from spirituality in favour of artifice in technical virtuosity.

Instead the Unknown Woman is led away by a Gentleman, who also claims to be a poet and is not afraid to love her or whisper her name at night.<sup>602</sup> When the Poet awakens, she has gone. The Astrologer can only lament the disappearance of his star, named Maria, from the heavens. The poet writes a couplet about the star-woman:

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597 Blok, *O liubvi, poezii i gosudarstvennoi sluzhbe*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.65;

'Литература должна быть насущным хлебом!'

598 *ibid.*, p.65; 'гражданские стихи', 'обличительные стихи', 'общественная', 'вы символист! Я и сам не поклонник Горького.'

599 Blok, *Neznakomka*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.77.

600 *ibid.*, p.86; 'только о тайнах знаю слова/только торжественны реч мои.'

601 *ibid.*, p.86; 'Падучая дева-звезда/хочет земных речей.'

602 *ibid.*, pp.89-90.



where are you Maria?  
I cannot see the dawn.<sup>603</sup>

In the final act, the Poet is about to recite his verse about 'the beautiful lady' (*прекрасная дама*) when Maria enters, but he does not recognize her. She has gradually been transformed into an image of worldly female sexuality, conveying the absence of spiritual dimension in decadence.

The picture of Serpentina indecently dancing barefoot is a recurrent view of absolute beauty. By the end of the play it is this image which captivates, in the mistaken conclusion that Serpentina represents not simply the interpretation, but 'the incarnation of music'.<sup>604</sup> The blasphemy of the misunderstanding of true artistic spirit is signalled in the first act. The dialogue is punctuated by jokes in which images of women are exchanged between men. A man brings out a cameo of 'a pleasant woman (*приятная дама*) in a tunic perched on the globe', which he says he is always happy to sell cheaply to the Russian intelligentsia, in this case represented by the Poet.<sup>605</sup> At the end of the play, Maria enters the society drawing room, which is also described as a 'brothel',<sup>606</sup> on the arm of the Gentleman. She is renamed Mary (*Мэри*) by the Hostess,<sup>607</sup> a detail which 'cheapens' her by associating her with prostitutes in their habit of taking another name. The wrong, foreign name also conveys her misrepresentation and a false exoticism. At this point the Unknown Woman disappears and the Poet and Astrologer, who failed to cherish her, are left baffled.

In many ways *Neznakomka* recalls Andreev's *Ekaterina Ivanovna*, particularly in the conspiratorial effect of the male drinking, joking and defilement of the image of beauty. Blok's following play, *Pesnia Sud'by* (1908, 'The song of Fate') unites the various strands of his preoccupations with the role of the artist, the struggle towards Divine Wisdom and the national spirit. In his letters, he expressed the significance of the play for himself, for art and for Russia. To Stanislavskii, who was concerned about why the play took place in Russia, he wrote:

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603 *ibid.*, p.93; 'Где ты Маря?/ Не вижу зари я.'

604 *ibid.*, p.96; 'воплощение музыки'.

605 *ibid.*, p.78; 'приятная дама в тюнике на земном шаре сидит'.

606 *ibid.*, p.96; 'публичный дом'.

607 *ibid.*, p.100.



It [this theme] is not only *greater than myself*, it is greater than all of us; and it is a universal theme.(...) In this way my theme appeared before me, my *theme about Russia*. (...) It becomes ever clearer to me that this is a prime question, the most alive, the most *real*. I have been developing towards this for a long time, since the beginning of my conscious life. (...) All these words of mine are in answer to 1) your concern over that which in my play I most cling to: Russia; 2) as a sign of my complete agreement with your conviction that all "isms" in art are linked to "refined, ennobled and pure realism."<sup>608</sup>

*Pesnia Sud'by* reveals the development of Blok's artistic strivings. The play contains elements of his past vision of Sophia as well as of his more complex, essentially Russian muse inspired by oral tradition. Mochulsky's study of Blok's work identifies the influence of oral poetry on the author, particularly in the characterization of the mysterious Faina.<sup>609</sup> Faina's relationship to the hero, Herman, reflects the strain of the artist's search for a genuine, nationally conscious art. The light and dark aspects of the muse are distinguished in two separate characters. Elena, without whom Herman would fall, is a creature in white, a strange woman who loves fairy tales. In the First Tableau she is associated with the winged symbols of the swan or the angel.<sup>610</sup> Faina is the beautiful, dark-eyed, gypsy singer who sings the 'song of fate' at the end of the Third Tableau.<sup>611</sup>

Having left Elena in order to discover Faina's feast of culture, Herman finds only the drunken banality of the modern world of the music hall and the automobile exhibition. Nevertheless Herman perceives Faina as 'eternal like a star',<sup>612</sup> and Faina reveals her ambivalent spirit. Herman will become the fiancé in the image of Christ for whom she is waiting in the Fourth Tableau. Dressed in traditional Russian costume she is transformed into the bride of Russian songs,

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608 Blok, *Pis'ma*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.8, pp.265-66; 'она не только больше меня, она больше всех нас; и она всеобщая наша тема.(...) В таком виде стоит передо мной моя тема, тема о России.(...) Все ярче сознаю, что это - первейший вопрос, самый жизненный, самый реальный. К нему-то я подхожу давно, с начала своей сознательной жизни.(...) Все эти слова мои - в ответ на 1) Вашу тревогу о том, что в пьесе моей я все твержу: Россия; 2) в знак полного моего согласия с Вашим утверждением, что все "измы" в искусстве включаются в "утонченный, облагороженный, очищенный реализм".' (Italics in original.)

609 Mochulsky, *op.cit.*, p.214.

610 Blok, *Pesnia Sud'by*, pp.104-06.

611 *ibid.*, p.127.

612 *ibid.*, p.141; 'вечная. Как звезда'.



waiting for her pre-destined betrothed. Herman's knowledge of Faina proves a destructive experience which marks him. His face bears the welt from a lash of her whip. But his role was also inevitable. Her imagery combines a vision of Russia with a vision of Fate.

At the end of the play Herman's 'soul is like the steppe', 'free from extremity to extremity'.<sup>613</sup> It is 'burning like the dark gaze of Faina'.<sup>614</sup> He feels 'as if I were christened with a second christening'.<sup>615</sup> Faina leaves, as all muses after the ecstasy of inspiration has passed, but Herman, led by a pedlar, will be reconciled to his native soil. As Mochulsky has demonstrated in his comparative analysis of the play and Blok's poems on the same theme, the pedlar in the closing scene is a symbol of peasant Russia, leading the hero out of the snowstorm and into the homeland.<sup>616</sup>

#### 5.2.4 Eino Leino

Leino's muse appears in many guises. Once again she is distinguished by her beauty and her special contact with the realm of the imagination. She is linked to a state of dream, illusion, madness or other mental transformation. She has many physical aspects, but represents a synthesis of all womanhood. The author makes this explicit in his short novel *Nuori nainen* (1910, 'Young woman'), in which four men meet:

They talked about women and meant woman, that sole, that great, indeterminate and only one.<sup>617</sup>

The men have gathered to reminisce. Their memories focus on a period in their past when each man's relationship with a particular woman transformed and inspired his life. Woman's beauty, characterized in the spirit of national romanticism by motifs from nature or myth, captivates the imagination. Xenia's lips are like two cherry-blossoms pressed together<sup>618</sup> and she possesses the vital sexual magnetism of a wild animal.<sup>619</sup> She stimulates the narrator's erotic instincts to their extreme.

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613 *ibid.*, p.159; 'Душа, как степь', 'Свободная от краю до краю'.

614 *ibid.*, p.159; 'сжигающий, как темный взор Файну'.

615 *ibid.*, p.159; 'как будто я крещен вторым крещением'.

616 Mochulsky, *op.cit.*, p.216.

617 Leino, *Nuori nainen*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.10, p.201; 'Puhuttiin naisista ja tarkoitettiin naista, sitä yhtä, sitä suurta, sitä epämääräistä ja ainoata.'

618 *ibid.*, p.230.

619 *ibid.*, p.245.



Saimi, symbolized as 'the fires of Kaleva',<sup>620</sup> is described as Eve (before and after the Fall), and as a goddess.<sup>621</sup> Fantasizing about her identity, the narrator tells her she was created like:

the beautiful one of the Nile, cold as a snake, to kill men by pressing your red lips together and then bring them to life again with a bat of your eye-lids.(...) Your ego lives on eternally in folk songs and legends.<sup>622</sup>

Both beyond the reality of this world and deeply expressive of life's essence, woman is the key to individualistic, existentialist experience. In each tale the narrator is transported from ordinary existence to a world of more meaningful fulfilment. All four tales deal with the aesthetic experience. The first is most specific in its discussion of art, focusing on the contrasting artistic temperaments of a painter and his wife (muse), Leena. Leena's dreams are senseless and unrealizable, yet she is more attuned to the power of universal creation than her late husband, who misguidedly sought to give art social purpose in the real world. She senses the beauty of life and believes that 'a true artist ought to be able to rejoice in the world just as it is.'<sup>623</sup>

The contrast between the planes of mundane reality and authentic experience of life's essence is not only related to Leino's study of artistic individualism. It is also central to his discussion of national aesthetic development. In it lies his rejection of Christian doctrine and modern, 'civilized' culture in favour of a pantheistic, non-Christian world-view.<sup>624</sup> This is most apparent in Leino's plays, which often contain a strongly allegorical historical dimension. Finnish oral poetry and classical tales provide the setting for Leino's studies of the muse and her relationship to the artist in his historic mission of cultural renewal.

This theme is developed in the first volume of Leino's collection of plays *Naamioita I* (1905, 'Masks I'), in which most of the plays

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620 *ibid.*, p.291; 'Kalevan tulet'.

621 *ibid.*, p.296.

622 *ibid.*, p.297; 'Niilin kaunis käärmehyinen, surmata miehiä kahden punaisen huulesi puremalla ja herättää jälleen eloon lumoavalla silmäluomillasi.(...) Tuo sinun itsesi elää iankaikkisesti kansanlauluissa ja legendoissa.'

623 *ibid.*, p.208; 'olisi oikean taiteilijan pitänyt voida iloita maailmasta juuri sellaisena kuin se oli.'

624 This theme is explored, for example, in the historical trilogy *Lalli* (1907), *Maunu Tawast* (1908), and *Tuomas Piispa* (1909). The plays contrast the value of natural, human instinct with a social order based on dogmatic principle. For an outline of Leino's pantheistic vision see Maria-Liisa Kunnas, *Mielikuvien taistelu: psykologinen aatetausta Eino Leinon tuotannossa*, Helsinki, 1972; pp.252-71.



represent powerfully symbolic theatre which will serve to illustrate this discussion.<sup>625</sup> The early, short lyric drama, *Väinämöisen kosinta* ('Väinämöinen's courtship'), retells the tale of Väinämöinen's courtship of Aino in the *Kalevala*. As a hero of oral tradition, Väinämöinen is associated with myths of creation, as well as with shamanist myths of transformation in which he uses his special powers to travel to the otherworld.<sup>626</sup> Leino uses the tale as an allegory of the artistic process, in which the muse symbolizes the Finnish aesthetic spirit. Aino was the Finnish ideal of femininity fastened on by writers of both the Romantic and neo-Romantic eras. In Leino's drama, she is 'the beauty of life', 'spring and flower'.<sup>627</sup> Väinämöinen is the seeker and embodiment of 'truth',<sup>628</sup> epithet of the essence of genuine art. In pursuit of truth, he has undertaken the strenuous journey 'to the firestones of Hiisi', metaphor of the artist's mental exertion.<sup>629</sup> Väinämöinen wants to 'rape' his muse, but she escapes. Disappearing into the air, she becomes 'a dream' (*haave*), 'a beautiful rainbow', while he returns to earth.<sup>630</sup>

In *Väinämöisen kosinta* the thematic context provides the national message, but the tragedy of the artist/shaman's struggle to possess his muse is essentially individualistic. In a similar lyric drama based on classical legend, *Lydian kuningas* ('The King of Lydia'), the wider repercussions of the hero's actions begin to emerge. The play is 'a scene from the tale according to Herodotus'.<sup>631</sup> Wishing to prove the superior beauty of his queen, the king, Kandaules, orders his general to hide and spy on his queen's naked body in secret. She discovers the plot to dishonour her and orders the general to kill her husband. The king's

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625 The one more realist play *Pentti Pääkkönen* will be omitted from this survey of the collection. Although it contains the same thematic context, heroic type and male-female relationship, the character of the hero's muse is more incidental to the drama.

626 Kuusi et al., *op.cit.*, pp.48-49.

627 Leino, *Väinämöisen kosinta*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.6, p.18; 'kauneus elämän', 'kevät ja kukka'.

628 *ibid.*, p.18; he says both 'I came to know truth' and 'I am truth myself' ('tulin tuntemaan totuuden' and 'min' olen totuus minä').

629 *ibid.*, p.18; 'Hiiden kiukahalla', i.e. to the otherworld.

630 *ibid.*, pp.18-19; 'haave', 'kaunis kaari'.

631 Leino, *Lydian kuningas*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.6, p.125; 'tarina Herodotoksen mukaan, kuvaelma'. Concerning Leino's sources see Teivas Oksala, *Eino Leinon tie Paltamosta Roomaan: tutkielma runoilijan suhteesta antiikkiin ja klassiseen perintöön*, Helsinki, 1986, p.181.



crime is against the secret beauty of his muse: 'the beauty of queens cannot be seen unavenged'.<sup>632</sup>

The king's act is an attempt to defy the power of the Gods and the order of the land. It creates chaos which results in his own destruction. This theme recurs frequently in Leino's drama and prose. It reflects his attitude towards the task of the artist, particularly within the national context. As Kandaules dies, the queen states that his is the fate of one who 'does not know how to rejoice in his own fortune but reveals it in the sight of all the nation.'<sup>633</sup> Leino experienced the process of creative work as an assault on his own mental and physical health. He also felt the strain of the artist's responsibility of challenging the established order and leading the way towards progress. But he retained his faith in the defiance of the artist.<sup>634</sup>

In Leino's work, the act of defiance is a necessary creative element of progress. It is fundamentally self-destructive, but it carries the force of renewal.<sup>635</sup> The general becomes the king's double, enchanted into action by the queen's kiss. His obedience to his muse has the approval of the Gods, his rule will command the loyalty of the nation. The tale describes the muse's revenge for her defilement by the artist, as well as the significance of the creative process for the people. The queen is an embodiment of eternal femininity with no motivation except the preservation of her essence, her untouched beauty. In her identification with the 'flower of death', Leino hints at the sinister side of her power.<sup>636</sup>

Two other plays in the collection to use powerful symbolic motifs for this theme are *Hiiden miekka* ('The sword of Hiisi'), and *Meiram*. In *Hiiden miekka*, the confusion over the various aspects of the muse presents a similar dilemma to that encountered by Blok's wandering Herman. Kultahelkka gives Äidin kuopus her golden heart, as his is broken in pieces.<sup>637</sup> Äidin kuopus is seduced from his warm, safe

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632 *ibid.*, p.136; 'kostamatta / kuningatarten kauneutt' ei nähdä'.

633 *ibid.*, p.140; 'joka ei / iloita itse osaa onnestaan,/ vaan paljastaa sen kaiken kansan nähden.'

634 See for example his essay *Eräs tilinteko* (1915, 'Settling an account'), in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.14, pp.409-38, in which he defiantly defends his position as a leading writer of both national and international significance.

635 This is a major theme in his poetry, the most well-known examples of which are *Kouta* and *Ylermi*, in the 1903 collection *Helkavirsiä I* (*Whitsongs*, 1978).

636 Leino, *Lydian kuningas*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.6, p.138; 'kuolon kukkaa'.

637 Leino, *Hiiden miekka*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.6, pp.25-26. The character's names are symbolic. *Äidin kuopus*, meaning 'mother's youngest', implies special qualities.



environment by the desire to discover 'culture'. He follows Sukkamieli, 'the light-footed empress of sprites, the queen of the forest and the moonlight'.<sup>638</sup> She represents mundane lust which intoxicates the soul with its sweetness.<sup>639</sup> His wanderings lead him to *Hiisi*, the Otherworld, where he exchanges Kultahelkka's heart, symbol of life, for a sword, symbol of immortality through fame. None of this leads him to the truth however, and he returns home to discover that Kultahelkka has restored and safe-guarded his own heart. The true muse has preserved his own culture, which encompasses his true identity. Kultahelkka embodies the idea of the genuine homeland to which the hero returns to find 'truth'.

In *Meiram*, 'an eastern fantasy in three acts',<sup>640</sup> the muse is part of the challenge to the order represented by institutionalized figures such as a priest, an ex-governor, and a soldier, all dark forces leading the people. Meiram herself conveys both the innocence and inevitability of her course. She is bewitched by drinking the morning dew,<sup>641</sup> and ultimately she sacrifices herself like Blok's Builder's Daughter.<sup>642</sup> In the association with the dawn she becomes an image of submissive perfection with magical powers.

The king had defied the commands of the Gods in taking Meiram for a bride before the flowers had faded on his former queen's grave.<sup>643</sup> Meiram is the muse who provokes the king's criminal act of defiance. It is an act both courageous and inevitable, but the potential for a new age is suppressed by the banal machinations of civic order. In this play Leino describes both officialdom's suppression of the force of rebirth which had been engendered by the king's act, and its betrayal of Meiram, embodying the inspiration and national integrity at the source of that act. Both artist and loyal subject are sacrificed by the established hierarchy to preserve the status quo.

*Kultahelkka* implies golden beauty. Their gender identities are marked on p.28, where Äidin kuopus refers to Kultahelkka as 'my dear adopted sister' ('Kasvinsiskoni kallis'), to which she replies 'My brave adopted brother' ('Kasvinveljeni verevä').

638 *ibid.*, p.29; 'Keijukaisten keveäjalkainen valtiatar, metsän ja kuutamon kuningatar'.

639 *ibid.*, pp.32-34; Sukkamieli also offers him honey and berry liqueur, while he craves rough bread and sour milk.

640 Leino, *Meiram*, in *Kootut teokset*, p.141; 'itämainen faantasia, kolme kuvaelmaa'.

641 *ibid.*, p.149.

642 *ibid.*, p.169

643 *ibid.*, p.167.



The most concise exploration of the theme of the artist's role in cultural renewal is to be found in Leino's third volume of plays *Naamiota III* (1908, 'Masks III'). This includes the very short play *Ritari Klaus* ('Sir Nicholas'), which consists of a dialogue between hero and muse. The spiritual-aesthetic theme is introduced by the stage directions: the portrait of the Virgin Mary hangs in the knight's quarters. The scene deals with a conflict of cultures. The knight has replaced his sword with a cross. His muse, Inkeri, brings him his sword but he refuses it. His refusal is a betrayal and she abandons him: 'I could love a man of crime, but not one who repents.'<sup>644</sup> When he says he loves her, she answers that she does not know who he is and leaves in silence.

Among Leino's collection of plays, it is *Alkibiades* (which appeared in the fourth volume, *Naamiota IV*, 1909, 'Masks IV') which creates the most perfect synthesis of the author's thoughts on art and national destiny. The Greek tragedy on which the play is based offered Leino the full potential for expressing his political and aesthetic philosophy in dramatic form. Commenting on the exceptional qualities of the Greek hero, Teivas Oksala has concluded that:

[Leino] could not have found a more suitable all-encompassing personality as the main protagonist for his "sacred drama".(...) the hero "whom no one could surpass neither in good nor evil", appeared to the young Leino as a model of the Nietzschean hero, the superman.<sup>645</sup>

Leino's *Alkibiades* is identified as 'wanderer', 'poet' and national, military hero who has lived by the sword.<sup>646</sup>

The play, which represented 'almost ten years of efforts' marked an important step in Leino's artistic development.<sup>647</sup> According to Oksala, the author himself singled it out as his only tragedy.<sup>648</sup> Insisting on the significance of *Alkibiades*, Leino added that it was his relationship with Finland and Finnish culture which spurred him on to

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644 Leino, *Ritari Klaus*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.7, p.9; 'rikollista miestä saatoin rakastaa. En miestä, joka katuu.'

645 Oksala, *op.cit.*, p.189; 'sopivampaa kokonaispersonallisuutta ei olisi voinut löytää "pyhän draamansa" päähenkilöksi.(...) sankari, "jolla ei ollut ylittäjää pahassa eikä hyvässä", näyttäytyi nuorelle Leinolle nietzscheläisen sankarin perikuvana, yli-ihmisenä.'

646 Leino, *Alkibiades*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.7, p.18; 'maankiertäjä', p.35; 'runoniekka'.

647 Leino, *Kirjeet IV*, p.91; 'tulos pian kymmenvuotisista ponnistuksistani'.

648 Oksala, *op.cit.*, p.200.



become a playwright.<sup>649</sup> In a letter to the actress Iida Aalberg requesting her to consider the part of Timandra in the play he writes:

I know that the opposition to me in Finland is very great.(...) But for once I feel compelled to utter a few words of truth to my compatriots, and I hope that you too will wish to support and assist me in this good purpose.<sup>650</sup>

Leino also felt that the character of Timandra, Alkibiades' beloved, was central to the theme of the play.<sup>651</sup> Timandra appears as the muse of earthly passions, identified with sensual beauty but also with the artifice of performance. Her movements are plastic<sup>652</sup> and her dance is that of a paid prostitute.<sup>653</sup> She contrasts with the 'maiden as white as the statue of Pallas Athene' of Alkibiades imagination, who is described in his poem 'Alkibiades' vision' in Act I.<sup>654</sup> This vision is embodied in Theano, the priestess of Pallas Athene, who represents pure celestial devotion. Theano is a 'virgin' whose will is equal to her 'love of the fatherland'.<sup>655</sup> Alkibiades tells her how 'the sun of your beauty shone over my young manhood'.<sup>656</sup> The dynamic tensions in Alkibiades' relationship with Timandra and Theano present his dilemma over his sense of identity and his sense of loyalty.

In Act I, the hero perceives his conflict as one between the demands made by 'the people's love' and 'woman's love'.<sup>657</sup> In both, his personal sense of belonging is an important element. Timandra appears in the play as both ruler and slave, queen and prostitute. Alkibiades' love for her has exhausted his powers to the point of effacing his identity:

You want to drain me of my glorious self-confidence.(...) And to make me so wretched in my own eyes that I no longer know or remember who I am.<sup>658</sup>

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649 *ibid.*, p.92.

650 *ibid.*, p.92; 'Tiedän että oppositio minua vastaan kotimaassa on sangen suuri.(...) Mutta minun haluttaa kerrankin sanoa pari totuuden sanaa omalle kansalle ja toivon, että Tekin tahtoisitte minua tässä hyvässä tarkoituksessa tukea ja auttaa.'

651 *ibid.*, p.91.

652 Leino, *Alkibiades*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.7, p.45.

653 *ibid.*, p.64.

654 *ibid.*, p.36; 'immen/ niin valkean/ kuin Pallas Athenen/ patsahan'.

655 *ibid.*, p.91; 'neitsyt', 'isänmaanrakkaus'.

656 *ibid.*, p.110; 'sinun ihanuutesi aurinko säteili yli minun nuoren miehuuteni.'

657 *ibid.*, p.26; 'kansan rakkaus', 'naisen rakkaus'.

658 *ibid.*, p.29; 'Sinä tahdot imeä minusta pois ihanan itseluottamukseni.(...) Ja tehdä minut niin raukaksi omissa silmissäni, etten enää tiedä enkä muista, kuka olen.'



He is incapable of action while Timandra's image is in his heart.<sup>659</sup> Theano arrives to try and restore Alkibiades' loyalty to Athens, and faith in himself. Theano was his youthful inspiration to battle:

that embodiment of beauty which I wanted to present before Hellas' dazzling face.<sup>660</sup>

The final conversation between Alkibiades and Theano resembles a shamanistic battle of words.<sup>661</sup> The scene presents the allegory of contemporary political-aesthetic debate, which includes the theme of the artist as a leader of the people. To Theano, the true spirit of national culture, Alkibiades states:

There was nothing greater than you. Only the priests, popular superstition and bad artists could limit the people's vision so that they could not see that right away. That is why war had to be declared on them first.<sup>662</sup>

Ultimately, it is he who feels betrayed by his people. The identity he has of himself in Act I appears by the end of the play as a prediction of the fate of the artist:

I am a man condemned to death, whose every blink of the eye must be won only by superhuman struggle,(...) whose very name is a battle-cry.<sup>663</sup>

### 5.2.5 The Artist-Androgyne

The thematic unity between artist, muse and nation in Leino's and Blok's work embodies a philosophy of individualistic and universal purpose. Creative power is in the hands of the Nietzschean superman,

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659 *ibid.*, p.99.

660 *ibid.*, p.111; 'se olennoitu kauneus, jonka tahdoin esittää Hellaan huikaistuvien kasvojen eteen.'

661 *ibid.*, pp.110-14. In oral tradition two shamans do battle with 'words', that is to say spells and incantations. The stage directions indicate that Alkibiades' speech should be ironic in tone while Theano's should carry pathos. The rhythmic dialogue tells of their past deeds. These features enhance the effect of a verbal duel in which the participants perform with their voice and knowledge.

662 *ibid.*, p.112; 'Ei ollut mitään sinua ylevämpää. Ainoastaan papit, kansan taika-usko ja huonot taiteilijat voivat rajoittaa ihmisten näköpiirin niin, että he eivät kaikki sitä heti oivaltaneet. Siksi oli ensin niitä vastaan sota julistettava.'

663 *ibid.*, p.55; 'minä olen kuolemaantuomittu mies, jonka jokainen silmänräpäys on vain ylivoimallisella taistelolla ostettavissa,(...) jonka pelkkä nimi on sotahuuto.'



who dares to transcend the existing order. But as in Blok's *Korol' na ploshchadi* and *Pesnia sud'by*, or Leino's *Lydian kuningas* and *Alkibiades* the course of destiny is simultaneously inevitable. Cultural independence in Finland was seen as the sole and pre-destined course for the nation. Russian writers believed in the universal mission of renewal of Russian culture. The duty of the exceptional individual was to realize these ambitions.

Myths of transformation lie at the root of the muse's significance for the artist-creator. In his role as superman, the hero undergoes a Christ-like or shamanistic transfiguration. In both Leino's and Blok's work, the role of prophet and wanderer identifies the hero as artist. In the ecstatic, creative moment which is provoked by the manifestation of the muse, the hero also experiences Dionysian transformation. As the god of drama and bestower of ecstasy, Dionysus was a central element of Symbolist aesthetics, in part inspired by Nietzsche's writings. Both Blok and Leino were interested in the myth and in its interpretation for contemporary aesthetic theory. At the time Blok was working on his drama, he became involved with Viasheslav Ivanov's Dionysian philosophy.<sup>664</sup> Leino developed his own interpretation of the myth from his knowledge of Nietzschean concepts of Dionysian irrationality and spontaneity in art.<sup>665</sup>

In symbolist interpretations, the Dionysian transformation embodies the duality of feminine and masculine principles. This androgynous metamorphosis discovers the agony of separation as well as the ecstasy of erotic union. This is expressed in the relationship between artist and muse. Blok's hero experiences the pain of loss, in the failure to recognize his muse and the passing of the moment of perfect harmony. The tragedy of Leino's hero lies in the cruel mental and physical consequences for the individual who dares to be a shaman. Both experiences contain the impression of the artist divided, which is manifested in duality (the ego as two) or solitude (the ego as half). The figure of the 'double' appears frequently in Blok's work. This is the role of Harlequin in *Balaganchik*, the Figure in Blue in *Neznakomka*, or even the Friend who stays with Elena when Herman leaves in *Pesnia*

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<sup>664</sup> Mochulsky, *op.cit.*, pp.153-54. For an outline of Viasheslav Ivanov's Dionysian symbolism see James West, *Russian Symbolism: A Study of Vyacheslav Ivanov and the Russian Symbolist Aesthetic*, London, 1970, pp.77-82. West points out that Ivanov also tried to link Dionysus to Christ (p.79).

<sup>665</sup> Oksala, *op.cit.*, p.134.



*Sud'by*. Leino's hero is alienated, seeking companionship yet finding peace ultimately only with himself. Solitude is the fate of all the heroes in Leino's plays discussed in this chapter.

The function of the muse remains very similar nonetheless in the work of both authors. As an image of perfect beauty, she reveals an inkling of the supra-real plane. Yet acquiring knowledge of her being demands personal sacrifice. Her relationship to the artist is the key to the action.

The feminine images in the works of Blok and Leino are never autonomous. The concept of the feminine is characterized by her extension of male individuality. Divine, natural beauty is equated with feminine sexuality. This establishes the muse's dependence on masculinity, but the reverse is not true. The feminine impulse offers the opportunity for man's transcendence to the exceptional role of artist, to universal communion, but man exists *per se*. He may be the tragic hero, the alienated human being, the captive of earthly order, but, as is characteristic of dualistic philosophy, he thinks therefore he 'is' nevertheless. He is the first principle, of which woman is an extension. Isolated, the feminine principle remains meaningless. Explicitly or implicitly, this is the universal order described by the interaction between hero and heroine.

In her memoirs, *Zhivye litsa* (1925, 'Living faces'), Gippius was insistent that Blok did not think of any real woman when he contemplated his Beautiful Lady, even after his marriage.<sup>666</sup> Her refutation of the role played by Blok's wife, Liubov', in Symbolist visions of Sophia was perhaps not entirely objective, but Gippius' instinct was correct. It was not so much that Liubov' inspired the image of Sophia, but that the ideal of Sophia was superimposed on Liubov'. The real woman did not exist as far as Solovëv, Belyi and Blok were concerned. By seeing her as a manifestation of Sophia, they created a living embodiment out of their ideal.<sup>667</sup>

Much emphasis has been placed on the influence of Blok's relationships with real women in his characterizations. Aside from Liubov's connection with Sophia, the actress Natalia Volokhova has been identified with the figure of his 'dark' muse.<sup>668</sup> The characters and

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666 Gippius, *Zhivye litsa*, Prague, 1925, p.19.

667 See Forsyth, *op.cit.*, pp.48-50, for a brief account of the role of Liubov' in the lives of Solovëv, Blok and Belyi.

668 Mochulsky, *op.cit.*, pp.171-72.



interaction in *Pesnia Sud'by* have been linked to the romantic intrigues of Blok's personal life.<sup>669</sup> In whatever way Blok's relationships may have coloured the character portrayals in his plays, his conceptualization clearly transcended reality. Women exist as symbolic ideals. The extent to which women fulfilled this role is reflected in the obituary Blok wrote on the death of the actress Vera Komissarzhevskaja in 1911, which is a tribute to a once living muse:

We, the Symbolists, (...) were not only in love with her, but with that which shone from her restless shoulders, with that, to which her sleepless eyes and always moving voice beckoned us.(...) She did not die, she is alive in all of us. And I pray to her bright shadow - her winged shadow - to allow me to adorn it with the roses and laurels of devotion, full of grief and respect.<sup>670</sup>

In an article of 1908 Gippius was particularly astute about Blok's portrayal of his muse:

Tender Blok, from the newer ranks, only sings to himself about a "Queen", a "Maiden" that he alone sees, who comes only to him(...); the Queen will understand because after all she is Blok.<sup>671</sup>

The ideal image of femininity is explicitly removed from the sphere of woman's actual existence. The muse's attributes are not idealized aspects of objectified womanhood, although her visualization in dance, for example, can be. The artist is androgyne, and the muse the feminine dimension within the male artistic psyche.

The female type exists relative to the 'thought' or 'idea' of the hero, while the very presence of an 'idea' identifies the hero as artist. Sophie Bonneau expressed the view that in Blok's drama, the incarnations of eternal femininity are reduced from the level of mediating, mystical symbols to that of 'a game of shadows.'<sup>672</sup> Bonneau

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669 Forsyth, *op.cit.*, p.69

670 Blok, *Vera Fedorovna Kommissarzhevskaja*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.5, pp.415-16; 'Мы - символисты (...) были влюблены не только в нее, но в то, что светило за ее беспокойными плечами, в то, к чему звали ее бессонные глаза и всегда волнующий голос.(...) Она не умерла, она жива во всех нас. И я молю ее светлую тень - ее крылатую тень - позволить мне вплести в ее розы и лавры цветок моей траурной и почтительной влюбленности.'

671 Anton Krainii (i.e. Gippius), *Dekadentstvo i obshchestvennost'*, in *Literaturnyi dnevniki (1899-1907)*, St Petersburg, 1908, p.341; 'Нежный Блок из новейших все пост себе самому про к нему одному приходящую, им одним виденную "Царицу". "Деву"(...); поймет и Царица, потому что, ведь и она - Блок-же.'

672 Sophie Bonneau, *L'univers poétique d'Alexandre Blok*, Paris, 1946, p.465.



sees this as a consequence of Blok's creative process. Blok's verse represented the fruits of the artist's inner compulsion.<sup>673</sup> The dramatic form placed a barrier between poet and muse. It demanded conscious, formulated 'secondary' art, at a distance from the 'self' he was able to express in poetry.<sup>674</sup> The 'shadow' effect of the muse in Blok's plays is not necessarily evidence of the incompatibility between the dramatic form and the author's artistic vision. It simply reveals the extent to which Blok conceived his mystical mistress as a dimension of the artist. The muses of Blok's dramas are no longer the absolute symbols conjured by his poetic 'I'. They react to the artist type.

Despite her role as inspiration, Blok's muse is not at the source of creativity. She remains a reflection, albeit in ideal form, of the hero's original idea. The hero is destined to struggle towards this reflection. The feminine incarnations of free and beautiful life in his lyrical dramas exist as mystical entities, whose reality is on another plane only partially perceived by the hero. She makes contact only with his double. The dimension of that plane is the hero's mind, his imagination or his memory, while the muse is characterized by her qualities as a reflection.

It could be argued that Blok's plays, which convey the impression of mystical illusions, are no more than reflections in their entirety, and that all the characters embody this quality. Even so, the muse is a reflection of the hero. The very context of *Balaganchik*, with its fantasy characters of Pierrot, Harlequin, clowns and maskers, is distinguished from the ordinary world of the character of the Author, who intrudes sporadically in an attempt to re-establish order. He tries to draw the plot back to his 'perfectly realistic play'.<sup>675</sup> The puppet show itself is a projection of the imagination. Within the mystical plane of the drama, the woman is at a remove from the world of the mystical artist-hero and her presence has a special significance for him. Columbine herself is mute.<sup>676</sup> There is confusion over her identity as Pierrot's bride (Pierrot's view) or as death (the view of the other characters.)<sup>677</sup> On her

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673 *ibid.*, p.471.

674 *ibid.*, p.472.

675 Blok, *Balaganchik*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.14; 'реальнейшую пьесу'.

676 *ibid.* The effect of her silence is mentioned p.11, and she speaks one line throughout the play, as she walks past Pierrot: 'I will not leave you' (p.13; 'Я не оставляю тебя.').

677 *ibid.*, pp.12-13.



entrance she has an 'indifferent expression in her tranquil eyes',<sup>678</sup> which are characterized by their 'mirror-like emptiness'.<sup>679</sup>

When she is led away by Harlequin she becomes 'a cardboard bride' in Pierrot's view.<sup>680</sup> It is Pierrot's diseased and foolish imagination which transforms her into cardboard. The lack-lustre of Columbine's eyes, like her silence, is an early clue to the inadequacy of Pierrot's creative idea. He utters her name as if seeking a destined union.<sup>681</sup> Her empty eyes, symbol of sexuality, are incompatible with his notion of her as a bride. The three couples who appear in turn to exchange kisses and words of love emphasize the failure of Pierrot's and Columbine's union. In the dialogue of the final couple 'she' echoes the final word of every line 'he' speaks. Like the mirror motif in Columbine's eyes, the dialogue suggests the inherent shadow quality of the feminine to the masculine.

The Builder's Daughter in *Korol' na ploshchadi* and the Unknown Woman of *Neznakomka* are also characterized as projections of the imagination. Their sexual dimension implies their relationship to the artist. In the crowd's view of the Builder's Daughter, masculine harmony is contrasted with feminine chaos:

Second speaker: Funny! You fear woman! Your voice trembled!  
First speaker: Do not laugh. I fear neither health, nor will, nor labour, nor masculine brute force. I fear insane fantasy, absurdity - that which is sometimes called the great dream.<sup>682</sup>

This dream is elaborated as the out-dated concerns of 'religion, poetry'.<sup>683</sup> While woman is the 'great dream', she is not the 'idea'. It is her beauty, a reflection of the idea, which attracts the soul of the Poet. The instinct of the Poet is marked by his admiration of women's 'fine hair, melodic voice and dreams of the impossible'.<sup>684</sup>

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678 *ibid.*, p.12; 'равнодушен взор спокойных глаз'.

679 *ibid.*, p.13; 'зеркальную пустоту'. The emptiness of her eyes is referred to three times.

680 *ibid.*, p.16; 'картонной невесте'.

681 *ibid.*, p.10.

682 Blok, *Korol' na ploshchadi*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.30;

'-Второй: Смешно! Ты боишься женщины! Твой голос дрогнул!

-Первый: Не смейтесь. Я не боюсь ни здравости, ни воли, ни труда, ни грубой мужской силы. Я боюсь безумной фантазии, нелепости - того, что звали когда-то высокой мечтой.'

683 *ibid.*, p.30; 'религии, поэзии'.

684 *ibid.*, p.37; 'тонкие волосы, струнные голоса и мечту о невозможном'.



Throughout the play, the Daughter does not enter into dialogue with anyone but the Poet. Their conversation is in verse, in contrast to the rest of the dialogue in the play. Although she is the first to address him, asking: 'Do you hear me?'<sup>685</sup> to which he answers 'I hear music',<sup>686</sup> her lines soon develop a responsive quality. The Daughter tells the Poet that he will be free as the dawn rises: 'You will sing when I am with you.'<sup>687</sup> In the final act the Poet 'recognizes' her for the first time when it is the last time for him to see her.<sup>688</sup> Their dialogue defines their union:

Builder's Daughter:

I looked for a hero in you  
I look into the eyes of the future.

Poet:

You came to me out of the great calm  
You looked then, as you do now, towards the dawn.<sup>689</sup>

The recognition is the ecstasy of inspiration.

The repeated eye symbolism, and the Poet's consciousness of the Daughter's visual aspect imply the consummation of the creative act. In *Neznakomka*, the sexual element of the muse plays an even more significant role, as the Poet loses control over her more unambiguously than in the other two plays. Unable to recognize his muse, he allows her to be cheapened through prostitution. The eye-symbolism in the play is extensive, and though she is more unreal, having descended from the sky, her image is more emphatically up for display. She is not only a star in earthly form, gazed at by the astrologer, but she is paralleled with the image of a prostitute who danced 'like a heavenly creation'.<sup>690</sup> The Poet describes women by their facial expression, and more explicitly, by the look in their eyes:

Hundreds of eyes, large and deep, blue, dark, light. Narrow like the eyes of the lynx. Open wide, like those of a young woman. To love them. To desire them.(...) And amidst these flames of gazes, this whirlwind of gazes, emerges, as if from beneath the snow,

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685 *ibid.*, p.40; 'Слышишь ты меня?'

686 *ibid.*, p.40; 'Слышу музыку'.

687 *ibid.*, p.41; 'Ты будешь петь, когда я с тобой.'

688 *ibid.*, p.54.

689 *ibid.*, p.54; '-Дочь зодчего: Я искала в тебе героя./ Я грядущему в очи смотрю. -

Поэт: Ты сходила ко мне из высоких покоев./ Ты смотрела, как смотришь теперь, на зарю!'

690 Blok, *Neznakomka*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.70; 'как небесное создание'.



one face: the true beautiful icon of the Unknown Woman, beneath a thick, dark veil.<sup>691</sup>

Thus she is both icon, on display, and veiled, hidden. *Neznakomka* clarifies the division between the female physical form and the projection of the ideal feminine. Only the latter is part of the artist's ego. As an embodiment of female sexuality divorced from the artist the fallen star becomes the fallen woman, whose name is Mary, who is equated with the prostitute. Her identity as Mary is the Magdalene dimension of the Virgin, while her identity as the Unknown Woman is the mystical vision of Sophia.

The same ambiguities in the feminine impulse are evident in *Pesnia Sud'by*. Both Elena and Faina are reflections of Herman's creative seekings. Elena will age quickly without Herman.<sup>692</sup> She understands nothing without him and her only recourse is to wait for his return. Faina is the 'secret' temptation which arouses his aesthetic and spiritual craving. She leads him into the Russian landscape, but she herself is mutable. Her various images reflect his discoveries of various aspects of culture. The bond between them is sealed by the mark Herman bears on his face, which equates him with the figure of Christ. Faina speaks of a man who seemed 'as if Jesus Christ himself' had appeared.<sup>693</sup> In the same moment she recognizes the black mark on Herman's face as a sign of 'the power of the cross'.<sup>694</sup> It is the mark she made. He tells her he has come because: 'I want to look at you,'<sup>695</sup> to contemplate her, because:

I understood a lot. That is how it all began. From the moment you struck me with your whip.<sup>696</sup>

Soon after her final appearance as a fusion between Fate and Russia Faina vanishes. Herman's experience is over and his wanderings are at an end. Herman's final solitude is the destiny of the individual artist

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691 *ibid.*, pp.76-77, 'Сотни глаз, больших и глубоких, синих, темных, светлых. Узких как глаза рыси. Открытых широко, младенчески. Любить их. Желать их.(...) И среди этого огня взоров, среди вихря взоров возникает внезапно, как бы расцветет под голубым снегом - одно лицо: единственно прекрасный лик Незнакомки, под густою, темной вуалью.'

692 Blok, *Pesnia Sud'by*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.4, p.112.

693 *ibid.*, p.139; 'будто сам Иисус Христос'.

694 *ibid.*, p.140; 'крестная сила'.

695 *ibid.*, p.140; 'хочу смотреть на тебя.'

696 *ibid.*, p.141; 'Я много понял. Тут все только и начинается. С тех пор, как ты ударила меня бичом.'



once the creative process has taken place. He has encountered his muse, his inspiration, and is left to return to himself. Herman's experience is more complete than that of the poets of the earlier dramas, but even in his final reconciliation his identity still contains the anguish of schism so often concretized in Blok's plays by the figure of the double.

Solitude is also the ultimate condition for the artist in Leino's work. The muse is equally a projection of the artist's own psyche. This identifies him as the androgynous entity which promises Dionysian transformation to shaman. The feminine and masculine aspects of the universe are both reflected and contained in the artist. Woman's dimension as muse means that she is both created out of and for the artist. Her image of beauty is the ideal created by the imagination, which transforms the hero into artist in the mould of the seer and leader. With the loss of Aino in *Väinämöisen kosinta*, the powerful stature of the shaman is effaced:

here I stand with arms open  
in my confusion and in my shame,  
like a child  
who was tempted by a rainbow.<sup>697</sup>

Aino exists only in Väinämöinen's mind:

What a fool I was to seek  
of life this vision of mine  
I begged this holy dream  
to touch, wretch that I was!  
The vision vanished into the air.<sup>698</sup>

Likewise the mystical Kultahelkka in *Hiiden miekka* has no identity of her own. She gives her heart to Äidin kuopus precisely because she has no need of it herself. When he asks her: 'do you not therefore long for your self?'<sup>699</sup> she replies: 'No. I remember myself best when I remember you. It is hardly possible that I have ever had any other self.'<sup>700</sup>

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697 Leino, *Väinämöisen kosinta*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.6, p.18-19; 'tässä seison syli avoinna,/ hämilläni, häpeilläni,/ niinkuin lapsi,/ vesikaaren viettelemä.'

698 *ibid.*, p.18; 'Houkkapa olin, kun etsin/ elämältä haavettani,/ pyytelin pyhäistä unta/ käsin, kurja, kosketella!/ Haave ilmahan hajosi.'

699 Leino, *Hiiden miekka*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.6, p.72; 'Sinä et siis kaipaa itseäsi?'

700 *ibid.*, p.72; 'En. Muistan itseni parhaiten, kun muistan sinut. - Tuskinpa minulla on muuta itseä koskaan ollut.'



The dream and memory which accompany the muse's image in these two works reveal her origin in the artist-hero's subconscious. As a dream, Aino is no more than a figment of Väinämöinen's imagination.<sup>701</sup> The feminine element in *Lydian kuningas* and *Meiram* is also the inspirational aspect of the creative act originating in the hero's mind. In the former play, the queen remains a precious and treasured jewel to the king as long as he keeps her image to himself. The desire to display her image is the desire of the artist to win recognition for his talent. He exploits his talent, his ideal of beauty, by exposing her dishonestly to the eyes of another. The balance between the negative and positive, the sexual identity of the androgyne, is destroyed. The king's general will kill him at the behest of his muse. The king's realization of the wrong he has committed is a realization like Väinämöinen's, of a wrong committed only against himself: 'I betrayed myself.'<sup>702</sup> In contrast to the king's act, the queen's shift in allegiance has nothing to do with her will. She obeys the natural, divine order which the artist attempted to defy. The general too will obey 'like a sleepwalker' after having been kissed by the queen.<sup>703</sup> The image of beauty, concealed but inspirational, finds a new hero. His act of murder represents the fecundation of the feminine ideal by the masculine will.

Similarly, Meiram is not actively responsible for the tragedy her presence incurs. She is merely a revelatory vision of a better future, to which the king responds but which the people cannot understand. She herself does not know who she is, and the enchantment of the morning dew gives her a unique goal: to see the king. In becoming his queen, the meaning of Meiram's role becomes inextricably fused with his, while the situation is created by his will. Meiram is the feminine, chaotic force behind the king's male androgynous act of challenging the social order, symbolized in their 'illegal' wedding.

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701 Aino is a composite character created by Elias Lönnrot from oral poetry materials about a young girl who takes her own life in horror at a sexual approach. Her death by drowning in the *Kalevala* variant is part of Lönnrot's Romantic adaptation. In Leino's own version, Aino's disappearance into the air and the rainbow motif are typical of the Symbolist preoccupation with the sky and the colours of the dawn in evoking the revelatory manifestation of the muse, springing from the artist's consciousness. In her study of the 'myth' of Aino, Irma Korte has concluded that Aino's drowning in the *Kalevala* also symbolizes her retreat into the hero's subconscious. See, Irma Korte, *Nainen ja myyttinen nainen*, Helsinki, 1988, pp.95-97.

702 Leino, *Lydian kuningas*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.6, p.139: 'Ma petin itseni.'

703 *ibid.*, p.137; 'unissa kävijänä'.



This pattern of male-female relationship is a recurrent feature of Leino's drama, whether symbolic or historical. In *Ritari Klaus* the fusion of identities in the male is explicit in the dialogue between the knight and his muse:

Inkeri: Why do you always speak only of yourself? Why do you not speak of me at all?

Klaus: I speak of you when I speak of myself.<sup>704</sup>

The fracture of this bond is the hero's tragedy, but also his destiny. Theano embodied Alkibiades' ideal of self-identity. He says to her: 'In you I saw that work of art.'<sup>705</sup> Despite his glory, 'I lacked a half of my honour, when I lacked you.'<sup>706</sup>

Indeed throughout Leino's prose as well as his drama, women represent mere reflections of the feminine aspect of the androgynous creator, whose visible identity is that of the male prophet. Leino's most independent, psychological portrait of a woman is that of the title heroine of the novel *Jaana Rönty*. She too moves through the novel like a spirit of natural impulse, adulterated by the power of institutions and self-interested individuals. By the end of the novel she is a metaphor for the inevitable chaos of the time. She dresses alternately in red and black, colours symbolic of her vacillation between fury and lament. Apocalypse and rebirth are enacted in her identity. She reads a passage from the Bible about the unity of male and female roles in procreation. She lapses into a day-dream from which she is aroused by the dawn, to find herself staring at her beautiful reflection in the mirror.<sup>707</sup> Then she goes out into the streets which are alive with rebellion. She turns into the image of an angel of death in the eyes of the kind Baron Manfelt, whose paternalistic era is over. He dies watching her, 'a young woman with a long plait skipping along the

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704 Leino, *Ritari Klaus*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.7, p.6;

'-Inkeri: Miksi puhut aina koko ajan vain itsestäsi? Miksi et sinä puhu minusta ollenkaan? -Klaus: Minä puhun sinusta, silloin kun minä puhun itsestäni.'

705 Leino, *Alkibiades*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.7, p.113; 'Sinussa näin minä sellaisen taideteoksen.'

706 *ibid.*, p.113; 'puuttui puoli minun kunniaani, kun sinä puutuit minulta.'

707 Leino, *Jaana Rönty*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.9, pp.417-19. The emphasis on her beauty at this stage contrasts with the description of her ageing, tired physical appearance (and her consciousness of no longer being sexually desirable) in Chapter 39, after the failure of the 1905 General Strike.



street and kicking the dead'.<sup>708</sup> He recognizes her from the past: 'young, shy, frightened like an elk'.<sup>709</sup> He reflects:

Was it not the spirit of the tribe herself dancing there, raw, red, frenzied, rejoicing in her escape, trampling under her heels the forms, ways and moral laws of a collapsing, civilized society?<sup>710</sup>

Her fundamental identity is as the muse of revolution in Finland, brought to life by the society which controls her.

Leino's most extensive, both introspective and socially critical prose work of the period is his four-part *Orja* ('Serf') series, published between 1911 and 1913. The novel's hero Johannes, is a seeker, whose wanderings take him through a process of perpetual 'enslavement' in his constant quest for personal freedom. The titles of the four parts of the novel reveal the consecutive false idols of his life: *Työn orja* (1911, 'Work serf'), *Rahan orja* (1912, 'Money serf'), *Naisen orja* (1913, 'Woman's serf') and *Onnen orja* (1913, 'Fortune's serf'), this last suggesting both happiness and fate. In each novel Johannes tries to create a principle by which to live and for which a different woman inspires him on each occasion. The asexual Aura was his work muse as he campaigned for socialism; Irene, with her perfect, cultivated beauty and youth, is the muse of wealth, whose corruption is reflected in the predatory and perverse lust (in Johannes' view) of her cousin Signe. In the third novel, natural sexuality is embodied in his muse of love, Liisa, whose boundless devotion eventually suffocates him. Finally, even the independent, intellectual Mrs Rabbing, who becomes his companion and appears to be his equal, is no more than the muse of his final happiness, a prediction of his reconciliation to solitude. Her 'masculine' character implies the final unity of his male androgynous personality. In later life, isolated and content, Johannes no longer has any need for the earthly embodiments of his feminine side in female sexuality.

Throughout the novel the character of the painter Muttala functions as the alter ego of Johannes. Muttala makes use of Johannes' discarded muses, as lovers and models for his paintings. Muttala represents artistic exploitation, the false side of art which lies in fame or

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708 *ibid.*, p.421 'pitkäpalmikkoisen naisen hyppelevän kadulla ja potkivan kuolleita'.

709 *ibid.*, p.421, 'nuorena, arkana, säikkyvänä kuin hirvi'.

710 *ibid.*, p.421; 'Eikö se ollut itse heimon hengetär, joka tanssi tuolla, raakana, punaisena, riihattomana, iloiten irtipääsystään, polkien kantapäänsä alle kukistuvan kulttuuriyhteiskunnan muodot, tavat ja siveyslait?'



commercial ambition. Johannes by contrast exhausts his relationships through the ecstasy of inspiration which sets him on a new path. An important scene in the first novel is an early indication of Johannes' creative seekings and his perception of the feminine as a dimension of his own subjectivity. The scene involves a lengthy conversation between Johannes and another Finn living in self-imposed exile, whom Johannes encounters on the streets of Paris.<sup>711</sup> Their discussion centres on nationalism and art. It includes an attempt to resolve the problem of individual identity within a broader utopian philosophy. To Johannes' horror, the man's ideal, expressed in terms of his admiration for the artistic values of Ancient Greece as well as an unashamed scorn of women, is an admission of homosexuality.<sup>712</sup> The man's philosophical outlook promotes the violent destruction of the feminine element and the cultivation of uniquely 'masculine', Apolline principles. Homosexual homogeneity presents no solution for Johannes, who believes in an ideal feminine force within creation, and consequently within his own identity. Nevertheless he does agree with many of the man's views, such as the manipulative threat of women's beauty. Johannes' own experience tells him that women are morally corrupt and respect only brute force, but he retains a faith in a feminine ideal. Leino creates a distinction between the real woman and the earthly embodiment of a heavenly ideal which is the hero's idea of that woman. The *Orja* novels chart the hero's struggle to retain control over his inspiration. His continued disillusionment with his achievements are manifested in his disillusionment with the women who signalled the birth of each endeavour. At the end of the last novel Johannes becomes a hermit.<sup>713</sup> It is in this final isolation that Apolline harmony is restored for Johannes as well as for Leino. The feminine principle has become successfully incorporated into the artist's identity, though not without the threat of madness and death. Johannes faces that threshold in his attempt to kill Liisa and himself shortly before he retires into total solitude.<sup>714</sup> The destructive element of rebirth takes feminine form, but is rooted uniquely in the male imagination. Alone, he becomes one with himself and the universe:

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711 Leino, *Työn orja*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.10. See Chapters 7 and 8.

712 *ibid.*, p.410.

713 Leino, *Onnen orja*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.11, p.466.

714 *ibid.*, p.466.



Is he christened? Is he pagan? He does not know himself. He only knows that truth is the highest religion of all and that the sun is the same for everyone, even though its light falls on the earth in different rays.<sup>715</sup>

### 5.2.6 Conclusion

Scholars of Blok's and Leino's work have noted the dualistic interplay between the Apolline and Dionysian aspects of the authors' world-view. Mochulsky has concluded that Blok:

dreamed of epic grandeur, of classical architecture, of life's fullness, of harmony and measure, of all the wonderful gifts of Apollo. But he was doomed to another God - to Dionysus - to his music, his holy madness, his erotic frenzy.<sup>716</sup>

Oksala has perceived a similar opposition in Leino's aesthetics, in his search for Apolline intellectual order and Dionysian sensuality.<sup>717</sup> Oksala remarks that:

Despite his theoretical caution he developed poems of genius on the problems stemming from Apolline and Dionysian polarity.<sup>718</sup>

These polarities expose an understanding of masculine and feminine principles which redefine the concept of universal dualism and the ambivalence of the androgyne.

In effect the system allows no equality between feminine and masculine principles. The synthesis which takes place in artistic creation is not a fusion of female and male, but a fusion of male with androgyne. Apollo embodies order, stability, while Dionysus represents the suffering of duality. In their union, the masculine positivity of Apollo harmonizes the chaotic imbalance of masculinity and femininity in Dionysus. The feminine itself, in isolation, represents absolute negativity, hopeless chaos, void.

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715 *ibid.*, p.469; 'Onko hän kristitty? Onko hän pakana? Ei hän tiedä sitä itsekään. Hän tietää vain, että totuus on korkein uskonto kaikista ja että aurinko on kaikille sama, vaikka sen valkeus eri säteinä maahan lankeaa.'

716 Mochulsky, *op.cit.*, p.292.

717 Oksala, *op.cit.*, pp.128-40.

718 Oksala, *op.cit.*, p.134; 'Teoreettisesta varauksellisuudestaan huolimatta hän kehitti nerokkaita runoja apollonisen ja dionyysisen polariteetin virittämästä ongelmasta.'



In the aftermath of inspirational transformation, the artist is in solitude. The Dionysian, shamanist, Christian myths of transformation which underlie the allegory of the creative experience are all characterized by this resolution. Alone, the artist regains stability. The Apolline identity asserts itself over Dionysian disorder. Where the feminine principle is allowed to dominate, degeneration follows, as will be seen in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER SIX

### 6 VISIBILITY (II): Perceptions of Female Sexuality

Woman's sexual identity informs the artistic process. The view that creative and pro-creative functions in art are respectively male and female is inferred from biological experience. Androgynous dualism contains the metaphor of sexual union between artist and muse.

These determinants are not without their tensions. The process describes a philosophy of masculinity as positive and femininity as negative.<sup>719</sup> For Leino and Blok, the dominance of the muse signifies the loss of positive identity. Man's quest for the power of art is a struggle for life. Woman represents the threat of madness and death. The dominance of the feminine principle in the male psyche leads man to subside into insanity or self-effacement. Woman, the living embodiment of the feminine principle, the embodiment of negative sexual impulse, the biological embodiment of cyclical creation, reminds the artist and man of his mortality. Linked to the natural order by her intuitive identity, woman has a special relationship with the mysteries of the universe. Oblivion, suggested by the provocation to madness and death, is the threat that woman brings to man. Man struggles to elude this fate through his creative idea, which offers the chance of eternal life. He tries to maintain his positive energy, by fusing with negativity, by escaping it or by destroying it. But woman, eternal force of negativity, embodies oblivion itself.

#### 6.1 Woman as a Force of Oblivion

In turn-of-the-century Finnish and Russian writing, themes of artistic power as a challenge to the establishment, the universal order as well as the political system, were widespread. The power of art over death was a major motif in symbolist writing. It runs throughout the work of Leino

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<sup>719</sup> The concept is well-established in philosophical tradition. For attitudes towards women in the history of philosophy see for example Bell, *op.cit.*



and Blok. Michael Green points out that the myth of Laodamia, which deals with the supremacy of the creative imagination over death, was taken up by three symbolist dramatists in Russia, one of whom was Sologub with his play *Dar mudrykh pchel* (1907, 'The Gift of the wise bees').<sup>720</sup> In Finland the notion of this supremacy is central to neo-romantic allegories of political resistance and the cult of the individual. It characterizes for example, almost all of Lehtonen's narrative works from this period.

### 6.1.1 Threat of Death

Woman consistently embodies the cosmic pull towards death. Järnefelt's play *Kuolema* (1902, 'Death') and Lehtonen's story *Paholaisen viulu* (1904, 'The Devil's violin') are just two examples of works in which woman represents the inevitability of death while man's idea or action makes a bid for life. In Finnish literature, death appears as the ontological dimension of woman's sexual identity in relation to man. In *Kuolema*, the hero Paavali is almost engulfed by the women who surround him. He begins as a prophet whose divine revelation is that death does not exist. He is gradually torn from his timeless idea until he is drawn into life's course. This development is marked by different women whose presence is a constant reminder of mortality. His coming to manhood is marked by his mother's death. It is the realization of this passage which urges him to deny death's existence. His mother, by contrast, recognizes death's image in a dream which is acted out on stage in Act 1. Most threatening to Paavali's refutation of death is marriage and, specifically, beautiful woman. This is perceived by the priest who calls him a false prophet.<sup>721</sup> The priest contrives to marry Paavali to his childhood love, Elsa. With their union, the priest is sure that:

the false prophet will die. See how the bridesmaids quietly rock him to eternal rest.<sup>722</sup>

Eventually Paavali will die in their marital home in a fire caused by Elsa's vengeful stepmother.<sup>723</sup> All three women are forces of death

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<sup>720</sup> Green, *op.cit.*, p.144.

<sup>721</sup> Arvid Järnefelt, *Kuolema*, in *Teoksia I-V*, Porvoo, 1925-27, Vol.4, p.78.

<sup>722</sup> *ibid.*, p.90; 'kuolee väärä profeetta. Katsokaa, kuinka morsiusneidot hiljaa tuudittavat häntä ikuiseen lepoon.'

<sup>723</sup> *ibid.*, p.129.



whose own experience of life functions to persuade Paavali of the existence of death. His mother does so literally, with her visions of death's approach and with her own death. Elsa does so by analogy, as the mother of his children who all die, indicating the disappearance of his line. The stepmother sees him as the reincarnation of her son (who also died by fire), turning Paavali into a spectre of death himself. She also tries to cause Elsa's death and finally causes his.

In *Paholaisen viulu*, the wanderer and bard Viuluniekka (literally 'Violin virtuoso'), as well as his son, who inherits his father's violin and his wanderlust, embark on a search for the source of life. The female character, Seelia, embodies a resignation to death in life. Viuluniekka's longing to wander is a freedom and individuality for which Seelia has not the spiritual capacity. Her whole existence represents the mourning of the losses she has experienced in her own life. It is a pact with death which begins in this world. By contrast even in death, Viuluniekka's violin and grave are infused with a life energy. The local cleric remembers: 'He called his life a bridal march,'<sup>724</sup> symbolizing an eternal first-coming to manhood. Ali, drawn to his father's ways must flee his mother's closed, oppressive existence because, explicitly, 'He is drawn by life and not death.'<sup>725</sup> The only other woman to appear in the novel is 'bright Sylvia',<sup>726</sup> who presents the obstacle of eroticism to his bid for life.<sup>727</sup> Ali is wise enough to value his violin over woman's seductiveness:

more precious to him than even bright Sylvia, will come to be the devil's violin.<sup>728</sup>

For Ali, like his father, sexual union is frozen at the point of erotic awakening, never succumbing to the living death that is love, marriage and motherhood for Seelia.

In Russian literature, woman's proximity to death is also an ontological facet of her sexuality, but it becomes here more eroticized,

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724 Lehtonen, *Paholaisen viulu*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.1, p.334; 'Morsiusmarssiksi elämänsä sanoi.'

725 *ibid.*, p.440; 'Häntä vetää elämä eikä kuolema.'

726 *ibid.*, p.314; 'kirkas Sylvia'.

727 *ibid.*, p.420. Ali recalls a moral tale in which first a monstrous ghost, then a madman, then the young wife of a priest appear to persuade a man to commit murder. He resists the first two evil spirits but is seduced by the woman, kills her husband and is taken to prison. Ali's erotic impulse is part of his quest for fulfilling life, but he is wary of woman.

728 *ibid.*, p.444, 'kalliimpi kirkas Sylviaakin hänelle on oleva paholaisen viulu.'



and as such more wilful and irresistible. The aura of the female vampire, epitome of dead sensuality, colours the image of the witch-like, title heroine in Kuprin's story *Olesia* (1898, *Olessia*, 1908), as well as the mask/double of Lorenzo's wife in Andreev's play *Chërnye maski*. Lorenzo fears his wife and begs her not to drink his blood. He despairs at 'how this vampire fastened herself upon my heart.'<sup>729</sup> Most unambiguously, vampirical woman appears in Sologub's work, especially in the story *Krasnogubaia gost'ia* (1909, *The Red-Lipped Guest*, 1977):

Slender, tall, elegantly dressed all in black, she stood so still and quiet as if she were not living.(...) Only the excessive scarlet of her mouth seemed alive in her pale face.<sup>730</sup>

Later she describes herself 'as a vampire risen from the grave'.<sup>731</sup> The story's protagonist, Vargolskii, is captivated by the icy, lunar Lilith who drains his blood. After their kiss, 'A dark and languid self-oblivion overshadowed Vargolskii.'<sup>732</sup> Intoxicated by 'the cold rapture' of her kisses he becomes debilitated by a sense of dull tranquility and an indifference to life.<sup>733</sup> He is suddenly revitalised by the appearance of a new-born child. He is saved by the spectre of wondrous Youth who banishes 'the evil enchantress with the excessive scarlet of her madly thirsting lips'.<sup>734</sup> In Sologub's work the cold, nocturnal sensuality of the Lilith type tempts man towards oblivion. In another story *Smert' po ob'iaavlenniu* (1907, 'Death by advertisement'), a man seeks death out prematurely and finds that it, or rather she, is there. The word death is feminine in Russian, but in this case there is more involved than grammatical marking. Rezanov advertises for a woman to appear as the image of his personal death.<sup>735</sup> He wonders what she will look like. He contemplates various types of woman, culminating in the image of a prostitute.<sup>736</sup> This is not only speculation over what kind of woman

729 Andreev, *Chërnye maski*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol.10, p.98; 'как к моему сердцу присосался вампир.'

730 Sologub, *Krasnaiagubaia gost'ia*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.12, p.167; 'Стройная, длинная, вся в изысканно черном, она стояла так тихо и спокойно, как неживая.(...) Только на бледном лице чрезмерная алость губ была живою.'

731 *ibid.*, p.172; 'как вставший из могилы вампир'.

732 *ibid.*, p.175; 'Темное и томное самозабвение осенило Варгольского.'

733 *ibid.*, p.176; 'холодному бешенству'.

734 *ibid.*, p.182; 'злая чаровница с чрезмерною аlostью безумно жаждущих губ'.

735 Sologub, *Smert' po ob'iaavlenniu*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.7, p.138.

736 *ibid.*, pp.139-40.



might answer the advertisement, but also a metaphor for the intended meeting, in that Rezanov will pay the woman to play his Death. Encountering death is an act of sexual consummation. Death is present in the image of all women, and symbolized by the most disreputable, and widely seen as a diseased aspect of female sensuality. For Rezanov she becomes individualized, her face the earthly human face of his own death. 'Slim, white, very quiet and serene', she has a 'clarity and submissiveness in her expression'.<sup>737</sup> As they kiss she pierces his neck with a poisoned stiletto, then lies dead herself over his body.<sup>738</sup>

### 6.1.2 Danger of Madness

While Sologub's Lilith type represents the threat of death to man, his Eve figure represents the insanity which is woman's own experience of her sexuality. In both Finnish and Russian literature, woman's sexuality is not simply a dangerous force to man, but can be a self-awareness which leads to her own oblivion. That oblivion is a madness which is marked by excess and epitomized in whoredom, the perverse excess of sexual indulgence. This motif is present in many portraits of women who enjoy sexual experience or freedom.

In Finland, the most studied example is found in Lehtonen's *Mataleena* (1905). Mataleena and her son are linked to one another by their spirit of rebellion. For the hero, this is expressed as the freedom of the wanderer and artist. For Mataleena it is indicated in a sexual promiscuity which is ultimately self-destructive. Her sexual awakening is revealed in her relationship to water. Her fear of the nearby deep lakes is her fear of her own sexuality. That fear keeps her in check, maintaining her ignorance of erotic desire. When she becomes provocative, she sees her own reflection, a 'phantom creature', in the water.<sup>739</sup> The reference parallels the earlier reference to the fantastic serpent-monster disguised in lilies, which as a young girl Mataleena believed could rise from the lake to drag to its depths those who dared to approach the water too closely.<sup>740</sup> Mataleena's confrontation with her own image - mirror symbolism suggesting sexual intimacy - is a

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737 *ibid.*, p.143; 'Тонкая, бледная, очень тихая, и спокойная', 'выражение ясности и покорности'.

738 *ibid.*, p.153.

739 Lehtonen, *Mataleena*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.334; 'utuolento'.

740 *ibid.*, pp.328-29.



recognition of her own sexual identity. It coincides with her realization of her loss of innocence and a consequent inclination to promiscuity.<sup>741</sup> Eventually she goes mad, becomes a whore, and loses one eye.<sup>742</sup> Her beauty has disappeared along with her mind.<sup>743</sup> She is warped by the inevitable negative impulse of her femininity, dragged to the depths of her own sexuality. Her son by contrast, though he fears 'the power of my nature like the weak, broken Christian wretch fears God,'<sup>744</sup> is not destroyed by his impulse. His sanity is protected by masculine positivity.

In Russia, the negative identity of woman's sexuality in its inevitable, promiscuous insanity is at its most prevalent again in Sologub's work, where it surfaces in a number of stories. It is manifested for example in the sexual craving of the title heroine of *Tsaritsa potseluev* (1907, *The Queen of Kisses*, 1977), in the animalistic eroticism of the title heroine of *Belaia Sobaka* (1908, 'The white dog'), in the sensual self-indulgence of the narcissistic heroine of *Krosota* (1899, *Beauty*, 1977), the bondage-loving heroine of *Dama v uzakh* (1912, *The Lady in Bonds*, 1977), and the hedonistic Liudmila in his novel *Melkii bes* (1907,<sup>745</sup> *The Petty Demon*, 1983). The sexually aware woman in Sologub is submerged in her own negativity. Excessive and mentally unbalanced, her sensuality is devoid of masculine presence. Intercourse itself usually does not take place, and where man is present his individuality is removed, as in the crowd of male lovers in *Tsaritsa potseluev*, or the supernatural possession of the flagellator in *Dama v uzakh*.<sup>746</sup>

## 6.2 Fear of Woman's Sexuality

The aspects of death and madness at the root of woman's sexual identity are not reserved for a symbolism of the threat of oblivion for the

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741 *ibid.*, pp.334-35.

742 *ibid.* She is referred to as a whore, for example, on p.299, as mad and half-blind, for example, on p.323.

743 *ibid.*, p.324.

744 *ibid.*, p.310; 'pelkään luontoni voimaa kuin jumalaansa heikko, särjetty kristitty raukka.'

745 The date is the first year of publication in full. The novel was written between 1892 and 1902 and first published, but without the final chapters, in 1905. Sologub, *Melkii bes, Predislovie avtora ko vtoromu izdaniuu* ('Author's foreword to the second edition'), in *op.cit.*, Vol.6, p.vii.

746 In Sologub's *Tvorimaia legenda*, two women also achieve ecstatic frenzy through the fulfilment of their longing to be whipped.



individual. The essential quality of whore that surfaces in woman's sexual incipience also presents a threat to the social order. The appearance of the whore implies broad-scale chaos. Woman may be a whore either as a literal social type (prostitute by profession) or as a manifestation of intrinsic, negative femininity (prostitute by nature).

The theme of woman's sexuality is used to denounce the corruption of the community. It describes the exploitation of women in both sociological and artistic contexts. There exists a defence of the feminine through a policy of exposing, with righteous indignation or hopeless cynicism, the violation of women in prostitution or the violation of the feminine in art. Although writers of both countries took up the subject of sexuality, and specifically the nature of woman's sexuality with its concomitant dangers, there was a certain difference in the responses of Finnish and Russian writers to the theme of sexuality. The topic was much more widespread and elaborately explored in Russian literature, in both realist and symbolist works, than it was in Finland. The Russian phenomenon of *dekadentstvo*, initially influenced by contemporary French literature, never flourished in Finland.

While in Russia the different classifications of decadent, pessimistic, naturalistic, or symbolist bodies of writing were debated at length, in Finland certain writers were sometimes accused of subsiding into a decadence which was seen as uncharacteristic of the Finnish literary temperament. The difference between Finnish and Russian 'decadence', particularly erotic decadence involving the portrayal of women or sexual impulses, was a real one, but the impression of the difference between the two literatures in this respect is greater than the difference itself.

### 6.2.1 Beauty and the Bond of Possession: A Russian Phenomenon

One aspect of woman's image which is distinctly typical of Russian literature is the tension that exists in portrayals of woman's exotic sensuality. Woman's sensual beauty is both terrible and irresistible.

In Russia, the gulf between the wealthy, educated classes and the common people was not simply vast, but complicated by the ambivalent feelings of the nobility towards the peasantry. In the work of turn-of-the-century Russian writers, there is an interplay between sympathy and



antipathy for the peasantry and working classes. Recognition of injustice in these classes' conditions of life was combined with an inability to sanction the ways and customs of the people: they were seen as barbaric, ignorant, and insensitive to the human condition. This ambivalence is particularly evident in the compulsive preoccupation with the nature of the *muzhik*, and pervaded the relationship between the socially-conscious privileged and the underprivileged. This phenomenon is at its most acute in the work of Bunin, who concentrated on the dynamic tension in the relationship between master and slave.<sup>747</sup> Bunin's story *Nochnaia beseda* (1911, *A Night Conversation*, 1923) provides the most lucid example of the author's ambivalent view of the common people. The story's idealistic young intellectual experiences conflicting reactions to the nature of the Russian peasant. After listening to a callous account of a murder, the student's initial infatuation with the life and wisdom of the common people, even with its vulgarity, hardship and indifference, is replaced by a horror of its ugliness, mercilessness, and animalistic instincts by the end of the story.

However, the *muzhik* had acquired some human status by the turn of the century. More underprivileged than any other social group were women. Subordinate to man within her own class and subordinate by divine or natural order to all men collectively, woman's status was the lowest of all. In Bunin's work, particularly in the love stories which appeared after 1905, woman's sexuality provokes tension. In this period of Bunin's work, nature becomes increasingly an 'incomprehensible amalgam of beauty and horror',<sup>748</sup> and woman is for Bunin an elemental force of that nature. She is wild and magnificent, but sexual encounters are steeped in an instinctive violence, as in *Pri doroze* (1913, 'By the roadside'), and can lead to murder or suicide as in *Legkoe dykhanie* (1916, *Light Breathing*, 1923) or *Poslednee svidanie* (1912, 'The last rendez-vous').

The bestial nature of woman's sexuality contains a specific definition of male-female bonds. An analogy is drawn between woman and horse. Bunin's descriptions of horses contain at least as much erotic quality as his descriptions of women. *Poslednee svidanie* opens with a scene of the protagonist's horse being saddled in the moonlight, with a

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747 Also referred to in Chapter One above.

748 James B. Woodward, *Ivan Bunin: A Study of His Fiction*, Chapel Hill, 1980, p.21.



heavy, high, cossack saddle.<sup>749</sup> The horse's eyes shine with the gleam of a precious stone in the moonlight.<sup>750</sup> Soon after, the rider sees Vera's eyes shine with her tears.<sup>751</sup> In *Pri doroze*, the fierce breed of the Khirgiz horse, with its bad blood,<sup>752</sup> hints at the sexual nature of the heroine Parashka. When Parashka screams the horse bolts. At the end of the story, after she murders her seducer, she runs wild into the fields.<sup>753</sup> She is caught after five days of chase, and:

breaking free, she displayed terrifying strength, bit three *muzhiks*, as they bound her hands with the new reins of a horse.<sup>754</sup>

The association between horse and woman contains more than the implication of woman's proximity to untamed nature. There is a parallel in the relationship of man to his horse and man to (his) woman. Both the above stories focus on the sexual encounter of a horserider and a woman in which a description of the horse acts as a prelude to the meeting.<sup>755</sup> The horse motif satisfies two elements of man's erotic desire: the fascination for the magnificence of nature and the need to possess and control it. The horse commands respect because it is man's ideal of an equal companion. A partner in life's most (subliminally sexual) stimulating activities (the hunt, the chase, war), the horse is yet obedient to the will of its master. It embodies nature's free spirit and intrinsic beauty combined with devoted loyalty to nature's ordained guardian and ruler, man. The horse is everything a man could want in

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749 Bunin, *Poslednee svidanie*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.3, p.329.

750 *ibid.*, p.329.

751 *ibid.*, p.332.

752 Bunin, *Pri doroze*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.3, p.428.

753 *ibid.*, p.446.

754 *ibid.*, p.446; 'отбиваясь, она проявила страшную силу, искусила трех мужиков, крутивших ей руки новой вожжовкой.' In his study of Bunin's work, Serge Kryzyski sees the use of reins to tie Parashka as evidence simply of her strength (Serge Kryzyski, *The Works of Ivan Bunin*, The Hague, 1971, p.124). This does not take into account the specific relevance to female sexuality of the constant interplay between the Khirgiz horse and Parashka's identity in the story. The parallel between horse and woman has been noted by Woodward but only insofar as it marks her rebellious, wild nature (Woodward, *Ivan Bunin*, pp.144-45). He does not note the significance of the reins to tie her hands. The story also describes sexual tension between Parashka and her father. Even here horse imagery comes into play. At one point she is excited at riding beside her father in a new cart drawn by his 'expensive, well-fed' (Bunin, *Pri doroze*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.3, p.434; 'дорогой, сырой') horse. The scene not only evokes the impression of a bridal procession, but also equates the notion of horse and woman as property in an indication of male status.

755 In *Poslednee svidanie*, the eroticism which is promised by the power and beauty of the horse at the beginning of the story is eventually replaced by the mundane image of a dog following its master, a parallel to the banality of the protagonists' actual relationship.



a woman.<sup>756</sup> Early in *Pri doroге*, the farm worker Volodia teases the young Parashka:

It's time to fix the bit firmer, to bridle you and lead you to the stallion.<sup>757</sup>

When Nikanor drops the reins of his Khirgiz horse to take hold of her hands and lead her into the thicket, he takes control of her.

The violence present in these stories is a sign of perversity in sexual relationships and specifically in the sexual instincts of the woman. It is part of a pattern of depravity in the depiction of female sexuality which is widespread in Russian literature. Themes of violence and depravity warn of the need to tame the wild force of nature that is female sexuality. This depiction of woman conveys a duality of attraction and fear which is even more prominent than in the portraits of the alienated common man, be he worker, tramp or peasant. In the degenerate eroticism of Tolstoi's aristocratic whore Mariette in *Voskresenie*, embodiment of sophisticated womanhood, in the disgusting appeal of Belyi's promiscuous peasant-woman Matrëna in *Serebrianyi golub'*, feminine symbol of Russian soil and spirit, the hero and the author alike are attracted and repelled.

In the dichotomy of sympathy/antipathy towards a social type is the consciousness of different and invariably superior status. Evidence of the fusion between attraction and repulsion can be found in the approach to female sexuality in the work of Andreev, Bunin and Kuprin. The theme is also often explicitly related to an idea of an ethnically separate group with which identification is impossible. In Andreev's story *Original'nyi chelovek* (1902, 'An Original') the hero is a nonentity who tries to make himself interesting by unexpectedly stating at a party:

And I like negro women!(...) In these black women there is something smouldering or, how can I explain it to you, exotic.<sup>758</sup>

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756 In his study of German literature of the fascist period, Klaus Theweleit has also remarked on the erotic descriptions of soldiers' relationships with their (invariably male) horses. See Theweleit, *op.cit.*, pp.52-53.

757 Bunin, *Pri doroге*, p.433; 'Где-й-то тут обротъ покрепче, пора тебя обрататъ, к бычку вестъ.'

758 Andreev, *Original'nyi chelovek*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol.3, pp.259-61; 'А я люблю негритянок!(...) В этих черных женщинах, есть нечто такое пламенное, или как бы это вам пояснить, экзотическое.'



His acquaintances, impressed, procure for him just such a woman whom he is forced to marry.<sup>759</sup> He acquires status because of his 'originality', but he feels trapped by the woman, who is physically repulsive to him and with whom he is unable to communicate, as she speaks no Russian.<sup>760</sup> The combination of marriage and racial difference highlight the inevitability of unity fused with alienation, a parallel of the Russian intellectual's feeling for the serf in nineteenth-century life and literature. More relevant to women's social inferiority is the reaction of the self-indulgent dinner guests. In their fascination for this sexual 'originality' resides a certain horror of the potentially deviant eroticism it may represent, only natural to the assumed untamed sexuality of the negro woman. Similarly, portraits of the more frequent ethnic types of the sensuous gypsy-woman, or the 'beautiful Jewess', as in the works of Kuprin and even Gor'kii, evoke this tension of a polarized image.

Andrea Dworkin has remarked that the image of the Jewess acts as:

a paradigm for the sexualization of all racially and ethnically degraded women.(...) The beautiful Jewess ravaged and dragged through the streets by her hair is still enticing, still vibrantly alive in the pool of sexual images that mystify the Jewish woman.<sup>761</sup>

The docile prostitute, Son'ka Rul', in Kuprin's *Iama* is:

a Jewess, with an unattractive dark face and an extremely large nose, from which she got her nickname, but with such beautiful large eyes, at once submissive and sad, fiery and limpid, which among all the women on this earth, are characteristic only of the Jewess.<sup>762</sup>

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759 *ibid.*, p.265.

760 *ibid.*, p.266.

761 Dworkin, *Pornography*, pp.143-44. Dworkin elaborates her point with a quotation from Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew* also appropriate here: 'There is in the words "a beautiful Jewess" a very special sexual signification...This phrase carries an aura of rape and massacre. The "beautiful Jewess" is she whom the Cossacks under the czars dragged by her hair through the streets of her burning village...the Jewess has a well-defined function in even the most serious novels. Frequently violated or beaten, she sometimes succeeds in escaping dishonor by means of death, but that is a form of justice.'

762 Kuprin, *Iama*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.5, p.35; 'еврейка, с некрасивым темным лицом и чрезвычайно большим носом, за который она и получила свою кличку но с такими прекрасными большими глазами, одновременно кроткими а печальными, горящими и влажными, какие среди женщин всего земного шара бывают только у евреек.'



Son'ka's nickname *Rul'* does not simply refer to the size of her nose, but means 'rudder' or 'helm', something to steer or lead (or drag) her by. In Kuprin's story *Zhidovka* (1904, *The Jewess*, 1917), the title heroine's beauty, reflecting both pride and suffering, is almost worshipped by the narrator. He sees in her the eternal qualities of 'dark Judith' or 'humble Ruth'.<sup>763</sup> But she is subtly degraded in her husband's indifference to her,<sup>764</sup> in the vulgar police commissioner's suggestion that she may be for sale,<sup>765</sup> and finally in the narrator's own desire to possess her.<sup>766</sup> Both vitally beautiful and whore (technically or intrinsically), the ethnic type in Russian literature conveys not only deviation from the norm, but also an animalistic sensuality which provokes man's compulsive desire to take control of it.

Racial identity, and the suspicion attached to it, are central to Kuprin's story; hence the title *ЖИДОВКА*, a disparaging term for Jewess rather than the neutral word *еврейка*. More than any other Russian writer, Tolstoi was an author whose conscious endeavour to adopt a life of simplicity and to promote human forgiveness and equality, regardless of religion, race and social group, was an inspiration of legendary proportions in his own lifetime. In his desire to relinquish all power, to relinquish the rights over other creatures that his position of leisure and wealth conferred upon him, he included the rejection of sexual dominance over women, a theme expressed together with his demand for chastity in all his late novels. In her study of Tolstoi's *Kreitserova sonata* and its biographical context, Andrea Dworkin concludes, however, that the sexual possession of woman was one area of power which he did not succeed in relinquishing:

More than any other privilege intercourse kept Tolstoy rooted in earthly, arrogant obsession - not poor and simple at all; having the right to use another person for pleasure and exercising that right at will; certainly not non-violent. He experienced the obsession as internal violence, violating him, not her.<sup>767</sup>

In Tolstoi's work it is the female race itself which violates man by provoking fascination and fear. Irresistible in her animal sensuality, woman threatens the reintroduction of base, bestial instincts into man's

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763 Kuprin, *Zhidovka*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.3, p.226; 'мрачная Юдифь', 'кроткая Руфь'.

764 *ibid.*, pp.220-21.

765 *ibid.*, p.231.

766 *ibid.*, p.223.

767 Dworkin, *Intercourse*, p.23.



civilized programme of peace and equality. This is projected as corruption and disease. In her extensive study of Tolstoi's work, Marie Sémon has incisively described the increasing presence of the threat of putrefaction and death in the portraits of women in his later novels.<sup>768</sup> In Tolstoi's novels male sexual urgency is encompassed by violence. Striving to give up wealth and power, Tolstoi found woman's very existence forced him to use power. In this sense woman's threat is that she controls man and his sexuality by forcing him to possess her.

Dworkin points out that Tolstoi's condemnation of woman's position as an object created for enjoyment, no matter what civil rights she is given, makes an analogy with serfdom, in the sense that 'the institution can be legally invalidated but people are kept and used as slaves anyway.'<sup>769</sup> Alison Assiter has also drawn the analogy between the master-slave dialectic and the way women are perceived in life and art.<sup>770</sup> Assiter's analysis concentrates on the Hegelian concept of individual autonomy. The tension in the master-slave relationship was observed by Hegel as a phase in the historical development towards freedom of spirit.<sup>771</sup> The bond was disadvantageous to both parties. While the slave must relinquish autonomy of will, the master's tragedy is that he cannot gain a proper sense of self from the relationship.

The expression of attraction and repulsion in the portraits of women in Tolstoi's work is related to his inability to relinquish the masculine right of sexual possession. The possession of woman makes her a sexual slave, a whore. This robs the man of the identity he seeks, for which Tolstoi holds woman accountable: in his work she is soiled and provocative.

Whether she is whore in the same social group because of the right of access conferred by marriage, or through her instinct as an ethnic whore, or by her position as hired whore in a brothel full of poor women, woman provokes repulsion when she should be attractive, equal, human. She is not human because, the function of the whore, like the function of the slave, is devoid of human emotion, servicing a need, without love, compassion or remorse.

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768 Sémon, *op.cit.* See especially the latter half of her work.

769 Dworkin, *Intercourse*, p.20.

770 Alison Assiter, 'Autonomy and Pornography' in Griffiths and Whitford, eds, *op.cit.*, pp.58-71.

771 *ibid.*, pp.64-65.



In Russia, serfdom was officially abolished in 1861. The relationship of the privileged classes to those who had had no rights was an ambivalent one. It combined sympathy in the discovery of the peasant's humanity, alongside a loathing for the culture and customs of the peasant community, a loathing rooted in too long an alienation from the recognition of that humanity. In Russian literature, the full force of this attraction/repulsion fell on a group of people still in almost total enslavement in Russia, women. A woman's passport showed which man she belonged to, or was replaced by a ticket showing she belonged to all men. Since this enslavement was at its most basic in the right of access of a man, by virtue of power, to a woman's body, the expression of the relationship's ambivalence centered on female sexuality.

Woman's body, alluring, also threatens degeneracy. In Russian literature, men are driven to madness and death by the failure to achieve sexual possession. Women, mad anyway if their sexuality is unleashed, are killed by their own or another's hand as a form of sexual consummation which sublimates sexual possession. These literary themes reflect a community in turmoil as a result of its struggle to redefine human relationships, the picture of Russian society as it was propelled towards chaos.



### 6.2.2 Self-Censorship of Women's Sensuality: The Finnish Example

In Finland, with no social institution of serfdom, there was an absence of this extreme relationship between the intellectual class and the common people. There was no self-identity of superiority through power in the intellectual class, but rather the opposite, a sense of national unity in the face of a greater power. The tension of repulsion and attraction in social or sexual relationships is almost indiscernible. In *Naisen orja* Leino expresses this in his portrait of Liisa, female sexuality which becomes jaded and threatens to engulf the hero. Leino was by this time disillusioned with the direction of Finnish politics and culture, and sensed his own lack of influence. For the most part however, the disillusionment with the romantic view of the people and spirit of Finland was never so great as in Russia, even in the post-1905 period. Moreover, in Finland the requirement for national unity at all cost produced a quite different phenomenon.

The Russian confrontation with social inequalities and with a heritage of sanctioned body ownership was contrasted in Finland with a self-censorship of social divisiveness. The absence of the thematic paradigm of attraction/repulsion was a manifestation of a repulsion itself, in that there existed the fear of internal confrontation. The exhortation to unity was not to be undermined by analyzing too deeply the relationship between separate social groups. The portrayal of the common people, though no longer purely romantic in approach, with serious depictions of hardship and ignorance, did not challenge the view of the essential humanity of the rural classes. The picture of nature itself retained its romantic purity, identified with the purity of the 'Finnish spirit'. Nature could appear severe, but it was never alienating or terrifying. Likewise the depiction of woman by Finnish writers is not steeped in the symbolism of putrefaction, degeneracy and violence which turns her into a metaphysical whore in the works of Andreev, Tolstoi, Bunin, Kuprin or Sologub. Social and ethnic motifs as criteria of superior status are almost entirely absent from Finnish literature. On the other hand it should be remembered that the presence of ethnic minorities in Finland has always been minimal, reducing their relevant potential as subject matter. Moreover, social unity against the threat of russification was the chief purpose of writers, not the self-conscious exorcizing of responsibility for social injustices as it was in



Russia. Even novels created in the disillusioned atmosphere of the post-1905 years, such as Kianto's *Punainen viiva*, do not question the basic humanity of the Finnish peasant. Leino's *Tuomas Witikka*, for example, which satirizes internal political conflicts, takes as its target the ideological intellectuals rather than the peasant community.

Where themes of social superiority in sexual encounter do occur, usually in the works of women writers, it is precisely to condemn the attitude of male rights of sexual access to women, but they contain none of the suggestion of inherent female sexual degeneracy, nor the implication of attraction and repulsion in the sexual use of women by men. In the work of Talvio, Canth, and Kallas it is a clear condemnation of male sexual violence, in the work of Jotuni and Onerva, it is a rebuttal of man's desire for sexual power.

Self-censorship in the drive for national unity reinforced existing attitudes in the depiction of female sexuality, moral strictness, characterized by an apparent determination not to look too closely, at least openly, at the accepted negativity of female sexuality. While the traditional, given assumptions of woman's sexual being as a force of madness and death were present in Finnish literature, the portrayal of this aspect with regard to degeneracy in sexual relationships was never so graphic.

One other, conscious reason for the rejection of 'decadent' elements in Finnish literature was its identification with Russian art. It is here that the element of ethnic suspicion that is so often part of the fascination with foreign exoticism is most clear. A distinct attitude of racial superiority towards the 'eastern neighbour' can be identified in Finnish history.<sup>772</sup> At the turn of the century, the fetishism and perversions of 'decadence' itself were seen as a specifically Russian phenomenon, part of the extremism always identified with the Russian revolutionary movement, and the Russian temperament. Finnish critics did not see Russian decadence as part of a wider European movement of pessimistic art, influenced by movements in France, Germany or Italy. It was seen as a Russian tendency which Finland was

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772 The attitude of superiority is evident in the first half of the nineteenth century among those who sought to promote a national consciousness based on culture. It is reflected for example in J.L. Runeberg's *Elgskyttarne* (1832, 'The elk-hunters'). The *laukkuryssä*, or pedlar from Russian Karelia who marketed his wares illegally in many parts of Finland was viewed with disdain and often appears as a foolish or unpleasant type in Finnish literature.



to guard itself against, both because it was Russian and because it was degenerate. Leino for example, describes masochism as 'that genuinely Slav vice' in *Seikkailijatar*.<sup>773</sup> Where themes of degeneracy are present in Finnish literature, there is a definite association with Russia. This is true of Leino's *Seikkailijatar* as well as Canth's *Agnes*, both of which place the blame of corrupt sexual behaviour on Russian life-styles.<sup>774</sup>

The work most reminiscent of the Russian portrayal of female sexuality is Aho's *Juha* (1911). This thematic dimension of the novel is essentially non-Finnish. It surfaces in the story's distinctly Karelian context. Aho's negative image of Karelia and its people contrasts with the common Finnish eulogies to this area's culture and community. In part it contains the traditional suspicion of Russia, but, written in 1911, it may also reflect Aho's disillusion with the neo-romantic movement of Karelianism. As such it expresses both internal and external tensions in the bond of community relations.

The novel contains many of the motifs of the Russian characterization of woman in the study of sexual possession provoked by erotic tension. *Juha* is the story of a love triangle. The young, beautiful Marja is seduced by Shemeikka, from Russian Karelia, and leaves her gentle, but old and lame husband Juha.

The characterization of Marja contains the animalistic magnificence and wildness typical of the ethnic type. In the first chapter she is introduced as burning with an irrational anger which reflects her frustration with her position. A gypsy and an orphan, her ethnicity casts her closer to nature: she is 'slender, tall, supple like a birch'.<sup>775</sup> These details all indicate the potential of heightened sexual impulse. When Juha took her in, she was shunned by the rest of the community for being a 'homeless russky'.<sup>776</sup> Later when Juha seeks help to rescue Marja, he realizes the community's reluctance stems from the fact that she is 'of another tribe, of black blood'.<sup>777</sup> Shemeikka is also a stranger to

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773 Leino, *Seikkailijatar*, in *Kootut teokset*, Vol.12, p.79; 'tuo aito-slaavilainen pahe'.

774 Canth's criticism is more emphatically directed at the urban life of St Petersburg rather than at Russian culture as a whole, but Leino's novel concentrates on the psychology and temperament of the Russian nobility.

775 Aho, *Juha*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.9, p.12; 'solakkana, pitkänä, joustavana kuin solkikoivu'. Note 'solkikoivu' is an unusual looking birch.

776 *ibid.*, p.28; 'mieron venakko'. Note that *miero*, 'homeless', also implies loose morals, as in 'of the streets'.

777 *ibid.*, p.65; 'toisheimoisesta, mustaverisestä'. This ethnic prejudice derives from religious suspicion of the Orthodox Karelians.



the community, though his name is well known. He is from a family of rich merchants, feared and hated and with a reputation for being thieves and kidnappers.<sup>778</sup> In Shemeikka, Marja recognizes her own passion and is propelled towards it.<sup>779</sup>

When Shekmeikka kisses Marja and awakens her sense of longing he also points out that she does not belong in the local community: 'What are you doing here, in this wretched land, one such as you?'<sup>780</sup> He claims that in Karelia 'a woman is a joy not a serf'.<sup>781</sup> Later she is to discover the full deception of these words; when she is forced to remain in his household like a prisoner. Shemeikka persuades Marja that she belongs to him :

because your thoughts burn in me and not in him. Because you come from where I come from. And because I do not ask permission, but take without asking, and if you won't come willingly, I will take you by force.<sup>782</sup>

The theme of belonging and human bonds is central to the tragedy of the love triangle. Juha, true Finnish peasant, has rightful sexual possession of Marja not because he is her husband, but because he is human, sensitive. Shemeikka's attraction to Marja is followed by his desire to be alone after intercourse.<sup>783</sup> This loss of interest is Aho's approximation to callous repulsion. Marja, pregnant, is forced to stay with Shemeikka against her will, discovering that he maintains a retinue of past lovers. The Karelian way of life, so recently idolized by Finnish writers, is here portrayed as an uncivilized tyranny. Marja finds that all the women are indeed still treated as serfs.<sup>784</sup> Aho takes the portrayal of barbaric Russian sexual bonds to its conclusion in his characterization of Anja, another of Shemeikka's former lovers, whose eyes shine with delight as she tells how Shemeikka has hit her, and then kissed her, cried and asked her forgiveness.<sup>785</sup> Marja's own reaction, her rejection of Shemeikka, appears more reasonable but is no less defined

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778 *ibid.*, p.21.

779 *ibid.*, pp.30-31.

780 *ibid.*, p.42; 'Mitä sinä täällä - tässä surkeassa maassa - semmoinen kuin sinä?'

781 *ibid.*, p.42; 'naista ilonaan pitävät, ei orjanaan.'

782 *ibid.*, p.48; 'sen tähden, että mielesi palaa minussa eikä hänessä. Sentähden, että olet sieltä mistä minä. Ja sentähden, etten minä kysy lupaa, vaan otan kysymättä, ja että jos et tule hyvällä, niin minä vien sinut väkisin.'

783 *ibid.*, p.73.

784 *ibid.*, p.123.

785 *ibid.*, p.124.



by the rules of possession. Her pride makes her want to be her beloved's only one.<sup>786</sup> Her loyalty shifts. She regrets what she has done and in this moment, she wishes that her child could have been Juha's.<sup>787</sup>

Marja escapes finally and returns to Juha, provoking him to an act of revenge in which he brutally hacks off Shemeikka's hand and foot. At this point Juha learns from Shemeikka that Marja was not forcibly abducted, but she willingly left him. Juha's act of violence is instantly invalidated by this knowledge. Unable to look at Marja, he drowns himself, and his suicide is his rejection of Marja. In this final death lies the tragedy of failed sexual possession. Juha, humble in his compassion which allows him to perceive Marja's humanity, can forgive her for her 'whoredom' through rape and pregnancy, but he cannot forgive her the exposure of her own, raw sexuality. It is this which finally drives him to suicide. Marja's sexual nature is not simply revealed in her infidelity. As in Tolstoi's work, woman in Aho's novel is held accountable for her provocation. Juha is repelled by Marja's ability to awaken his own animalistic sexuality, his own desire for power in sexual possession. Earlier, Marja notices and rejoices in the masculinity of Juha's desire for revenge.<sup>788</sup> Juha's blow to Shemeikka is the climax of his new-found masculinity, but it brings with it emptiness in the knowledge that he cannot possess Marja after all, because she went willingly to another man. Impotent, he is remorseful, but also repelled by the woman provocateur of his base sexual impulse.

### 6.3 The Secrecy of Sexuality Made Public: The Judgement of Pornography

The power of woman's beauty provokes man's desire to possess and control. This desire is partly, at least, inspired by the fear of nature uncontrolled. Woman's sexuality unleashed becomes a metaphor for social chaos. Though civilized man craves the vitality embodied in woman, it threatens the loss of civilization. These same fears characterize attitudes towards literary pornography.

In her negative sexuality, woman represented both disease and promiscuity: the image of a whore. The understanding of woman's inherent sexuality as whoredom was a pornography of essential

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786 *ibid.*, p.126.

787 *ibid.*, p.124.

788 *ibid.*, p.162.



womanhood in a literal sense: it described woman as whore. The artistic or moral criteria for such a depiction gave it an argument however. If it was defensible in its didacticism or aestheticism, it was not considered to be obscene. In her study of contemporary pornography Dworkin defines the distinction:

Obscenity is an idea; it requires a judgement of value. Pornography is concrete, "the graphic depiction of whores."<sup>789</sup>

For literary critics at the turn of the century, the word 'pornographic' was a synonym for obscene. It indicated the judgement that a work was not worthy of being shown (artistic criterion), and corrupt or corrupting (moral criterion).<sup>790</sup> Decadent elements in literature were often judged to be obscene, or in contemporary terminology, pornographic. Many artists either denied that their work was decadent, or refuted the view that decadence was synonymous with pornography. Their moral and aesthetic defence was based on a claim for the liberalization from sexual taboos, mostly concerning women, and the artistic credibility of erotica, mostly in the depiction of women. Those who rejected these arguments charged writers who dealt with themes of sexuality (mostly involving women) with creating pornography.

### 6.3.1 The Moral and Aesthetic Debate: Russia

In Russia, the accusation of creating pornography was levelled most vociferously at Artsybashev's widely-read and influential novel *Sanin* (1907, *Sanine. A Russian Love Novel*, 1915). The novel exposes the sexual and social relationships of the educated classes. It discusses sexual perversity such as sadism and incest with an unprecedented frankness. Generally considered a vulgarization of Dostoevskii's psychological explorations of the baser human instincts, the style and content of the novel became a yard-stick for measuring the pornographic element in Russian literature. One of the novel's many damning critics was Gippius. She attacked the author for his total lack of communion with

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<sup>789</sup> Dworkin, *Pornography*, p.9.

<sup>790</sup> Dworkin points out that these are the two meanings in the etymology of the word 'obscene'. See *ibid.*, p.9.



spiritual ideals, which for Gippius was an aesthetic, as well as a moral, criterion in art.<sup>791</sup>

The characterization of Sanin himself, who sees nothing wrong in a hedonistic sexual indulgence, and the details of erotic fantasy were central to the view that the book was obscene. The novel was charged with lacking any moral theme that could act as justification for this sort of erotica. In fact the novel contains a very strong condemnation of hypocrisy in male-female relations which is not far removed from the condemnation in Tolstoi's *Voskresenie*. Where *Sanin* differs is in that it includes none of Tolstoi's struggle towards chastity. Quite the contrary, it demands the acceptance of sexual instincts as a natural element of human behaviour. This view was upheld by many supporters of the free love movement. It lies at the basis of Gor'kii's refutations of the taboo of female sexuality.

While Gor'kii's portrayals of sensual vitality celebrate the innocence of uncorrupted nature, Artsybashev confronts the forces of human desire with cynical recognition. *Sanin* does not lack a moral and aesthetic argument in its sexual content, but it was viewed as obscene because it was too blatant in its argument. It was a literary parallel to the social pornography represented by the growing eye-sore of prostitution, all too visible on the streets of Russian towns.

As for eroticism, the novel's explicit sexual fantasy is actually limited to one scene in the third chapter, where a Sadeian image of 'cruelty and lust',<sup>792</sup> is contained in one sentence. The paragraph in which this sentence occurs explains the meaning of this image uneuphemistically as the male desire to possess the expectedly submissive body of a woman.<sup>793</sup> The image is a mental fantasy of Sarudin, who is portrayed as a despicable libertine with little intellectual capacity and a malicious, selfish personality. The argument here is against the kind of sexuality which requires the dominance of woman by man, particularly in violent sexual gratification. The fact that in the fantasy the woman is specifically mentioned as not only pure but

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791 See Temira Pachmuss, 'Mikhail Artsybashev in the criticism of Zinaida Gippius' (*Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol.44, 1966, pp.76-87).

792 M. Artsybashev, *Sanin*, Berlin, 1909; p.25; 'сладострастной жестокости'.

793 *ibid.*, pp.24-25. The character, Sarudin, predicts how 'this proud, intelligent, pure and well-read young girl will lie beneath him, like all the others, and he will do anything he wanted to her, as he did to all the others' ('эта гордая, умная, чистая и начитанная девушка будет лежать под ним, как и всякая другая и он так же будет делать с ней, что захочет, как и со всеми другими').



intelligent and well-read, recalls Tolstoi's point that women's education will not change male attitudes about women as sexual property. Artsybashev's novel takes this point even further. The author demonstrates that men, no matter what their level of morality or intelligence, are in a position to exploit women by virtue of the social structure.<sup>794</sup>

Occurring early in the novel, the details of Sarudin's fantasy promise pornographic descriptiveness which is, however, not repeated. The nature of sexual imagery in its pornographic, erotic, or even naturalist quality is a question of personal judgement and taste. It cannot be denied that Sarudin's sadistic fantasy contains familiar pornographic motifs. But so does the association of violence, murder and putrefaction with woman's sexuality, also a Sadeian feature, which proliferates in Tolstoi's late work.

With both authors, the imagery is central to the moral message in their work, and therefore arguably not gratuitous. In uniquely descriptive terms, the sexual imagery of woman in *Sanin* is far less graphic or eroticized than Tolstoi's. Men, experiencing lustful feelings, see real or imagined women as 'beautiful', 'shapely and strong', with a 'full bosom', 'round, sleek shoulders', 'nimble hands, slim legs', and 'full, luscious lips'.<sup>795</sup> In Tolstoi's work, woman's body is a picture of lust provoking morbidity and violence by virtue of its existence.<sup>796</sup> It appears both sensuous and diseased.

In *Sanin* the view of the female form is prosaic even by the standards of the day. It is at its most shocking in the attitude of the lecherous Voloshin: 'the most important thing in woman is the bosom.'<sup>797</sup> Violence against women in Tolstoi is directed in a specifically sexual way, an element which Dworkin has linked to depictions in commercial pornography.<sup>798</sup> Tolstoi is no less graphic than Artsybashev.

794 It can be noted that this is Canth's radical argument too, although she favours Tolstoyan chastity rather than liberal morals as a solution. Like many women writers, she was conscious of the conflict between the ideal of free love and the sexual double-standard, expressed for example in her story *Salakari*.

795 Artsybashev, *op.cit.*, e.g. p.107; 'красивая девка', p.164; 'полная и сильная', p.47; 'высокую грудь', 'круглые покатые плечи', p.116; 'гибкие руки, стройные бедра', p.166; 'пухлые сочные губы'.

796 See particularly *Kreitserova sonata*, *Otets Sergii* (1911, *Father Sergius*, 1959), *Diabol'* (1911, *The Devil*, 1985), *Fransuaza* (1891, *Françoise*, 1906) and *Voskresenie*.

797 *ibid.*, p.204; 'самое главное в женщине - это грудь.'

798 Dworkin, *Intercourse*, p.23.



The Sarudin fantasy is the single explicit image in the novel. He imagines Sanin's sister, Lida,

lying on the ground; he heard the slash of a whip; he observed a blood red stripe on the soft, nude submissive body.<sup>799</sup>

In *Voskresenie* a female prisoner remembers her husband:

Molodënkov was drunk and for a joke had dabbed vitriol on the most sensitive spot of her body and then roared with laughter with his mates as they watched her writhe in agony.<sup>800</sup>

The suggestion of mutilated female genitalia combined with male bonding is at least as powerful a pornographic image as flagellation, and probably more imaginative. The scenario is more vivid because it is a fiction of real experience, not a fantasy. Moreover, veiled details, rather than unembellished biological fact, in sexual description are a common device for achieving titillation.<sup>801</sup> The use of euphemism, 'the most sensitive spot of her body', heightens sexual tension.

Thus aesthetically, as well as morally, *Sanin* fails to live up to its reputation of obscenity. What was considered obscene in *Sanin* is a reversal of contemporary values about normal and abnormal sexual motivation. This includes Sanin's incestuous admiration for his sister, Lida's own confusion over her response to this (which she fears and yet finds interesting), the suggestion of woman's sexual self-awareness in several female characters, and most of all, Sanin's cynical indifference to pregnancy and motherhood. The erotic element becomes pornography here because the social and moral dimension is unacceptable. Artsybashev's *Sanin* does not lack a moral code. Sanin does not harm anyone, defends his sister, condemns Sarudin, and reciprocity is essential to his view of sexual fulfilment. His amorality lies in that he

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799 Artsybashev, *Sanin*, p.25; 'увидел ее на полу, услышал свисть хлыста, увидел розовую полосу на голом нежном покорном теле.'

800 Tolstoi, *Voskresenie*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.13, p.122; 'Молодёнков в пьяном виде, для шутки, мазнул ее купоросом по самому чувствительному месту и потом хохотал с товарищами, глядя на то как, она корчилась от боли.'

801 In his analysis of the way striptease functions, Roland Barthes points out the necessity of mystifying the naked body (decor, exotic disguise, scanty clothing) to turn it into a spectacle of sex. This element makes 'voyeurs' of the spectators, who watch 'in a sense a spectacle based on fear, or rather on the pretence of fear, as if eroticism here went no further than a sort of delicious terror, whose ritual signs have only to be announced to evoke at once the idea of sex and its conjuration.' Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers, London, 1973 (1957), p.91.



does not respect the social standard which governs relationships. When his sister finds she is pregnant as a result of Sarudin's seduction, he realizes that this is unfortunate for her sake, but he himself does not consider her actions shameful.<sup>802</sup>

The novel draws a clear distinction between the hedonistic liberalism of Sanin, and the liberal exploitation of Sarudin. Sarudin's fantasy and actions are portrayed as wilful perversion. He is not excused by even that almost subliminal suggestion of diminished responsibility implicit in the drunkenness of Tolstoi's Molodënkov as he mutilates his wife (only 'for a joke'). Unlike the sadism of Sarudin's fantasy, Sanin's vague, incestuous feelings for his sister include no actual sexual imagery.<sup>803</sup> The charge of obscenity lies in the idea of sexual indecency implicit, not explicit, in these sexual patterns. Incest, widely accepted as unnatural, is obscene in the novel because the author appears to be indifferent to it. Tolstoi's aversion for the female form and the sexual act, by contrast, is accepted as natural and even moral because in his repulsion he condemns sexual promiscuity.

Tolstoi's revulsion for woman maintains the social convention of male possession of woman, private and personalized in marriage and motherhood, as the correct one. Artsybashev uses the theme of incest as a challenge to moral double-standards. It is an extreme motif which asserts the natural sexual attraction between male and female regardless of social conventions. Artsybashev takes issue not with that attraction, as Tolstoi does, but with what action men and women take, sanctioned by society, given that the attraction exists. The novel shows that Sarudin's immorality is abusive and exploitative of women, but protected by social convention, which allows pornography in secret. In secret, Sarudin has his sadist's fantasy about Lida. In secret, he can seduce Lida. In secret, Sarudin and Voloshin exchange erotic tales about women:

They did not like woman, were not grateful to her for the pleasure she gave them, but merely strove to humiliate and insult the sex, to inflict upon it indescribable pain.<sup>804</sup>

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802 Artsybashev, *op.cit.*, p.153.

803 *ibid.*, e.g. p.56. He exclaims to her that she is 'a beauty' (красавица), and she is confused by his gaze.

804 *ibid.*, p.205; 'Они не любили женщину, не благодарили ее за данные наслаждения, а старались унижить и оскорбить ее, причинить самую гнусную и непередаваемую боль.' This observation is extremely radical. Even today, men who produce and consume pornography claim they do so because they 'love' women.



This is an accurate parallel of the scenario of pornography, both social (watching the possession of women in prostitution and rape), and metaphorical (male fantasy of sexual possession of women). Both the social and metaphorical forms take place hidden from public view: hidden from women collectively. Sanin shocks the critics and the characters in the novel, because he openly admits his attraction to his sister, as well as his attraction to other women. This is not only public but depersonalized. He expresses blatantly what he believes is felt by all men for all women. Sanin goes too far in revealing the male sexual arrogance cultivated by society. At a time in Russia when prostitution became increasingly uncontrollable, Artsybashev's novel and the reaction to it mirrored contemporary attitudes. Prostitution no longer operated in secret. It was exposed by and to women in particular. *Sanin* was considered obscene not because of its erotica, which was mundane, nor because it lacked a moral argument, which was not the case. It was considered obscene because its erotic and moral themes exposed, too blatantly and impersonally, the realities of male sexual possession.

In the major work of the period on the pornographic aspect of Russian decadence by G. S. Novopolin, the author draws a revealing parallel between Artsybashev's Sanin and Turgenev's Bazarov. For Novopolin there exists a relative morality in these two heroes' respective 'biological' approach to woman. Like Bazarov, Sanin views romantic attraction as 'a physiological process', 'some kind of chemical reaction'.<sup>805</sup> Bazarov however exercises a certain discretion in his seduction of his host's maidservant. Moreover he has the good taste to distinguish between the woman he trifles with and the woman he would want as a life-long companion: 'He could only fall in love with an intelligent woman.'<sup>806</sup> In Novopolin's view there is a justification in Bazarov's attitude which he calls 'moral'. In Bazarov's response to women and sexuality, Turgenev actually maintains the traditional role of women. Bazarov, discreet in his sexual urges, personal in his ultimate desire for one woman, a woman who represents the old world which he as a nihilist stands against, still poses no threat to the system of possession. Indeed Bazarov's human tragedy at the end of the book resides in his failure to possess that woman. Sanin lacks these qualities,

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805 *ibid.*, p.153; 'физиологический процесс', 'какую-то химическую реакцию'.

806 G.S. Novopolin, *Pornograficheskii element v russkoi literature*, St Petersburg, 1909, p.130; 'Он мог бы полюбить только умную женщину.'



and admits too bluntly the nature of the male sexual prerogative. Novopolin does not decry the principle of the male attitude common to Bazarov and Sanin, but the frankness of Sanin's indifference.<sup>807</sup>

### 6.3.2 The Moral and Aesthetic Debate: Finland

Finland lacked a body of 'hard-core' decadent writers of the type identified by Novopolin's study. In view of this, the debate over pornography was largely directed towards the Russian literary scene. Novopolin's work is based on lectures he gave in 1907-08 when he felt that the pornographic genre had reached 'the zenith of its development'.<sup>808</sup> In 1908, in the Helsinki journal *Argus*, Russian literature was described as suffering from a 'pornographic epidemic'.<sup>809</sup> In a two-part article Georg Erastoff discusses the work of a number of authors who also appear in Novopolin's book, such as Artsybashev, Kuzmin and Kamenskii. He also argues that Andreev's work lies dangerously on the fringes between pessimism and decadence. Erastoff denounces the term 'decadent' as a euphemism for 'calculated eroticism and at times simply artistic pornography'.<sup>810</sup> The question of pornography penetrating the realm of belles lettres provokes similar fears of blatancy. It is the confrontation with woman as a sexual being which seems to repel the writer. The article classifies anonymous tales for titillation and Sade's republished memoirs alongside theoretical works on sexual behaviour, all seen as part of a common phenomenon which reveals a tendency to depravity:

licentiousness is draped these days in the transparent mantle of "popular science". A limitless amount of publications such as the following have begun to appear: "The history of prostitution in Europe", "Sexual psychopathy", "The physiology of sexuality", "Woman's physical world".<sup>811</sup>

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807 *ibid.*, see his argument pp.127-130.

808 *ibid.*, p.6; 'в эните своего развития'.

809 Georg Erastoff, 'Erotism i dekadens i Rysslands litteratur' (*Argus*, no.15, 1908, p.1); 'pornografiska epidemi'.

810 *ibid.*, p.1; 'på förnuftet grundad erotism och stundom helt enkelt kontsnärlig pornografi'.

811 *ibid.*, p.1; 'så draperar sig även vår tids tygellöshet i "vetenskapens populariserings" genomskinliga mantel. I ofantlig mängd ha börjat utkomma publikationer som följande: "Prostitutionenes historia i Europa", "Könslig psykopati", "Könskärlekens fysiologi", "Kvinnans fysiska värld".'



At least, the author is happy to note, 'the history of a courtisan's underwear' would be sent 'in a closed packet', a 'sort of curtsey to official morality' indicating the nature of the work.<sup>812</sup> The problem with 'artistic literature' by contrast, is that the:

monstrous spectre of eroticism is concealed in the most careful fashion: thanks to the names of the authors, to the elevated and beautiful style and sometimes even thanks to an exalted tendentiousness.<sup>813</sup>

Whether or not the author is correct in this last assessment is not important, but his 'absolutism' over the issue of sexuality is. For Erastoff pornography includes information about the conditions of prostitution and medical knowledge of female sexuality. Although he is ironic, the 'closed packet' appears a fortunate solution, allowing some semblance of respectability. By contrast, it is worth recalling that the secrecy from women of their gender's sexual exploitation is a recurrent theme in the work of Talvio and Canth, as is the denial of woman's sexual identity in the work of L. Onerva. In Finland, the preservation of society's moral and aesthetic purity seems to have demanded rigorous self-censorship.

The dangers of creating a divisive portrayal of female sexuality were evident early in the period from the response to Järnefelt's short novel of 1897, *Maria*. The novel provoked great public outrage, as Pekka Häkli's assessment of contemporary reviews demonstrates.<sup>814</sup> The novel concentrates on the character of Maria, the mother of Jesus. Järnefelt's Maria is no meek, serious-minded virgin, but an attractive, spirited woman, who likes the company of men and may even have a tendency towards promiscuity. She is pregnant but does not want children and Joseph's arrival saves her from public shame. Eventually, through a spiritual awakening inspired by Joseph, she adopts celibacy.

The novel tries to deal with the ever-present problem of human sexual instinct and the morality of abstinence. Järnefelt had previously published a theoretical work on the same subject, *Puhtauden ihanne*

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812 *ibid.*, p.1; 'historien om en kurtisans pantalonger', 'i slutet paket', 'ett slags nigning för den officiella moralen'.

813 *ibid.*, p.1; 'den konstnärligen litteraturen', 'Erotisms vidunderliga spöke är här maskerat på det mest omsorgsfulla sätt: medels författarnes namn, genom formens ädelhet och skönhet och stundom även genom en upphöjd tendens.'

814 Pekka Häkli, *Aroid Järnefelt ja hänen lähimaaailmansa*, Helsinki, 1955, pp.303-09.



(1897, 'Ideal of purity'), which discussed issues such as masturbation and prostitution. However this work, didactic in style, provoked very little reaction. The ideology expressed in both works is consciously reminiscent of Tolstoi's asceticism, though with a more sympathetic view of the human weakness of sexual instinct.

The main objection to the novel *Maria* was its portrayal of the mother of Christ as a woman with sexual desires. Critics described her as a whore or at least as having the makings of a whore.<sup>815</sup> This criticism was not uniquely an accusation of religious blasphemy. Järnefelt's *Maria* is too reminiscent of ordinary woman. The characterization of *Maria* is not sufficiently distant from Finnish identity. She is not larger than life, nor distanced by an exotic setting of remote time or place, despite the obvious context of the biblical tale. In the novel Järnefelt tries to convey the impression of a historical reality, not a miracle or myth. In this way he seeks to convey the human dimension of sexuality as well as the accessibility, on a realistic level, of sexual restraint. The depiction of woman's inclination to sexual enjoyment in such a realistic context, despite the obvious symbolic function of that context, was not acceptable.

Objectors to the novel saw not a parallel, but a contradiction between the morality expressed in *Maria* and that in *Puhtauden ihanne*. Reeni Roine's review of the novel reveals the mentality of self-censorship. He complains specifically about the passages which describe *Maria*'s passionate nature. In Roine's view the only explanation for such description is that the author:

has committed a sin in his imagination and presented the monstrosity of his imaginings for the public to admire. But he should not have done this. It would have been appropriate for Mr Järnefelt to have covered himself with a sack and placed ashes on his head rather than told others about it in this way.<sup>816</sup>

Järnefelt and his publishing company received so many letters of complaint that the author was obliged to publish a defence of his novel's moral outlook.<sup>817</sup> The focus of the issue was *Maria*'s conscious sexuality,

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815 *ibid.*, p.306.

816 *ibid.*, pp.304-05; 'on mielikuvituksessaan tehnyt lankeemuksen ja esittänyt kuvittelujensa epäsiikön julkisuuteen ihailtavaksi. Mutta tämä olisi saanut olla tekemättä. Hra Järnefeltin olisi ollut johdonmukaista pukeutua säkkiin ja panna tuhkaa päänsä päälle eikä ruveta siitä tässä muodossa muille kertomaan.' Note the use of the word *epäsiikö* ('monstrosity') which literally means 'non-foetus'.

817 *ibid.*, p.308.



which by definition meant her intrinsic nature of prostitute. Järnefelt's brother pointed out that the author could have satisfied the public and made his point about the birth of Christ by portraying greater modesty in Maria.<sup>818</sup> This would have preserved the public desire for decency and good taste.

The same moral and aesthetic attitude about woman's secret sexuality is evident in the response to another novel to shock the public and the critics over a decade later, despite the more liberal atmosphere of the post-1905 period. L. Onerva's novel *Mirdja* was one of the most controversial works of its day because of its ostensibly pornographic content.<sup>819</sup> The main charge against the author was that she revealed aspect of woman's life which should remain hidden. By discussing woman's sexual life, author and protagonist alike put themselves in a dubious context. Woman is not supposed to have any knowledge of sexual identity because that identity of woman is revealed only in the secret observation of prostitutes, but never in decent society. To reveal the sexual self is therefore to reveal the prostitute.

The expression of sexual identity is thus an admission of sexual immorality on the part of the author. To exhibit the prostitute is to produce pornography. But pornography is permissible if it is maintained in secret. Written by a man, L. Onerva's novel would have portrayed man's special knowledge of female sexuality, gleaned from those places where respectable women have not been. This is where it is seen to exist, not in the emotional or psychological life of woman, which only stretches to romantic love. Only when it is corrupt does it go beyond this.

Women writers directly confront the notion of their own image and sexuality as fundamentally obscene. In *Mirdja*, L. Onerva explores aesthetic criteria at length. The main theme of the novel in fact has less to do with sexual freedom than with woman's relationship to art. The sexual content has tended to obscure this layer of the work because of the interests of reviewers and critics. *Mirdja*'s life is essentially a process of artistic self-discovery and to a certain extent reflects L. Onerva's own confusion over how to channel her creative talents.<sup>820</sup> More significantly it raises the problem of woman's artistic identity in relation

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818 *ibid.*, p.306.

819 Sarajas, *Viimeiset romantikot*, p.223.

820 R. Nieminen, *Elämän punainen päivä*, pp.29-33. The author describes L. Onerva's attempts to analyze herself and her gift for music, poetry, acting and painting.



to social expectations. Mirdja first struggles with her role as performer, then her role as muse, and finally her role as an objectified image.

Mirdja is of the artist-wanderer type in her approach to her environment, though her sense of an absence of a home stems more from an inability to integrate herself in society than a longing to travel. However she has also inherited the soul of her mother, 'a stranger, a wanderer, a travelling singer'.<sup>821</sup> Mirdja rebels against established social and religious institutions and custom. Her rebellion is a process of finding her 'self' beneath the layers of 'civilization', which centres on moral attitudes. The moral theme is used in the manner of symbolist writing which in Finland focused on the division between church and personal morality in an attempt to analyze the individual, creative will. In L. Onerva's novel, woman's search for her creative identity provides the deeper significance of the series of romantic affairs which trace Mirdja's psychological development. Love was a central theme in the expression of artistic unity, particularly in the French symbolism from which L. Onerva took her major influence. As well as Mirdja's rebellious instincts inherited from her mother, the importance of the theme of art in the novel is evinced by her environment, which reproduces the world of cafés and salons frequented by L. Onerva and other artists at the turn of the century. In addition to this, aspects of Mirdja's artistic experience are signalled by the musical motifs which head each chapter and recur through the verse sections of the novel.

Mirdja struggles with her identity as a woman exploited and projected in various ideal forms in art. The first part of the novel introduces her struggle with her role as a myth figure through performance. This is explored in Mirdja's relationships with men in the second part. In the first chapter, she is rehearsing the role of Shakespeare's Juliet, while Rolf, her only loyal friend throughout the novel, declares her to be a *bayadere*, an Indian temple dancer, by instinct.<sup>822</sup> At the age of fifteen, Mirdja believes in Shakespeare's Juliet as the manifestation of art's purity. In the following section, she 'performs' various roles in her relationships with men, which always impose an ideal on her behaviour. The ideal finally submerges her identity as a woman, until she is a shadow image within the male

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821 L. Onerva, *Mirdja*, Keuruu, 1982, p.124; 'muukalainen kiertäjä, maantielaulari'.

822 *ibid.*, p.31; 'bajadeeri'.



concept of love. The second part of the novel is entitled 'Madrigal', a word which points to the female creative function in its etymology. The short chapters, each a romantic liaison, are described in musical terms. In each story, Mirdja tries out a new role which develops the first projection of her image as muse, when her lover Mauri tries to impose conditions of eternity on their relationship. For her the affair loses its beauty because 'She saw herself in this man's hands for ten years as a an experiment...as a guinea-pig.'<sup>823</sup> Over the following stories she discovers various roles for herself based on how her lover sees her. She is a sister of mercy, an immoral woman, a whore in order to escape being a prude. Gradually she turns into Morpheus, offering ideals through sleep and dream to the men who love her, and in the final story, her relationship with a painter makes explicit her dilemma. He says to her: 'they say that you do not spare souls' to which she answers: 'they say that you do not even spare bodies, but that is exactly why you are the artist...'<sup>824</sup> Mirdja by contrast is 'the rare nature of an artist' in his words, at which point she rebels.<sup>825</sup> 'What is it you demand of a woman? Nothing, or at most a reflection of yourself.'<sup>826</sup>

Mirdja's experience eventually leads her to isolation abroad, when she considers the image and significance of the Madonna as the embodiment of an ideal. She seeks identification with the Madonna on her own terms, but the intervention of a man as she admires the statue by Crivelli marks the corruption of that image.<sup>827</sup> The Madonna becomes Medusa and turns her to stone as she struggles with man's vision of the Madonna as both saint and whore. By the end of the novel Mirdja finds no escape from her dependent image in creation. At first she thinks she has found equality in her relationship with Runar, who is an exception for not having demanded her beauty of her. But at the end of her life she has not fulfilled her reproductive function. She has no child, and simultaneously she feels her art was ultimately the performance of a street walker.

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823 *ibid.*, p.53; 'Hän näki itsensä tuon miehen käsissä kymmenen vuotta koesineenä...koe-eläimenä.'

824 *ibid.*, p.99; 'teistä kerrotaan, ettette säästä sieluja', 'ja teistä kerrotaan, ettette säästä edes ruumiitakaan, mutta siksi te olettekin - taiteilija...'

825 *ibid.*, p.100; 'te olette harvinainen taiteilijaluonne'.

826 *ibid.*, p.100; 'Mitä te vaaditte naiselta? Ette mitään, tai korkeintaan heijastuksen itsestänne.'

827 *ibid.*, p.147.



L. Onerva was acutely aware of the sexual aspect of symbolist concepts of beauty. She raises the point of the division between the mental abstraction of the beauty of the muse and her real life image which becomes identified with sin. The man who interrupts Mirdja as she admires Crivelli's image of Madonna-like beauty comments: 'God was a greater decadent than Crivelli in creating you,' that is to say Mirdja herself, the female form in the flesh.<sup>828</sup> The pornography implicitly imposed on the physical image of woman is also present in her own contemplation of her naked body in the mirror in Part 1 of the novel.<sup>829</sup> She finds her image beautiful, but her sexual self-awareness (both her pleasure in her beauty and her desire to have her yearnings for pleasure satisfied) provokes in her mind images of death. She ponders the potential suicide of her recent lover.<sup>830</sup> Her subsequent dream expresses a social and moral rebuke to her desire to share actively in what is usually a masculine domain, with the consumption of alcohol as a symbol of sexual patterns in society.<sup>831</sup> She suggests moreover that the element of sharing will be healthier for the man. Woman's duty is to deny herself both sex and alcohol, and to refrain from 'tempting' man to either, which she does by her participation. Thus Mirdja's nakedness provokes a subconscious despair over its inevitable obscenity, both as aesthetic degeneracy in the relationship of her beauty with death, and as moral degeneracy in the accusation of sinfulness in her dream.

In the year before the novel's publication, Leino's *Maan parhaat* (1907, 'The land's best') appeared, describing the masculine problem of being able to enjoy a sexual encounter with a woman who was not respectable, but being unable to do so with a respectable woman. Leino may have been accused of an immoral and bohemian life-style, but despite his treatment of sexuality and even sexual perversity in his work, he was not considered to produce pornography. Written by a man, L. Onerva's novel would have been a 'closed packet', hidden from women not because they would not be allowed to read it, but because they would have no right to comment on it without compromising themselves. For a woman to address the issue of female sexuality meant her own experience of it, and this knowledge was unacceptable. Men had the

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828 *ibid.*, p.148; 'Jumala on ollut suurempi dekadentti kuin Crivelli luodessaan teidät.'

829 *ibid.*, p.41.

830 *ibid.*, p.41.

831 *ibid.*, p.42



prerogative here, because not only was their sexual urge considered normal, but only men could have access to woman's image in brothels and pornography. For woman to reveal sexual self-knowledge identified her with her image as men saw her when they were able to make use of her sexually. The treatment of woman's inner 'sexual' identity by male authors was generally applauded by critics as perceptive, sensitive accounts of female psychology. L. Onerva's *Mirdja* is neither erotic nor lacks a moral code, but like Artsybashev's *Sanin* it goes too far for contemporary views. Subjective sexuality in a woman, blatant and independent of a specific male, was feared to be ipso facto pornography.

#### 6.4 Obscenity as the Given Quality of the Feminine Image

The fine line between art and pornography in the representation of woman is succinctly conveyed in Belyi's *Serebrianyi golub'* where the hero, a poet, has published a book of verse bearing a fig-leaf on the cover and describing his fiancée as a naked goddess:

it was the fruit of the poet's inspiration, he argued, and the women in question were not just naked women, but goddesses... A goddess or a woman, it is all one. Who were those goddesses of antiquity if not women? They were women without a doubt and of a dubious quality besides.<sup>832</sup>

This remark puts in question once again the nature of the muse in her femaleness. Her goddess-like role threatens madness and death if it becomes too powerful within the artist's psyche, and furthermore there is a 'dubious quality' in her nature when she is identified specifically as woman rather than goddess. The mental and physical deterioration caused by the dominance of a feminine principle is, logically, at its extreme in the embodiment of that principle divorced from masculinity: woman herself.

The essence of corruption which is perceived in the living image of woman is evident in many works by all male authors. It consists of a sinister eroticism, evil or dangerous, which is conveyed by the female form. In symbolist works the muse is transformed into living woman at

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832 Belyi, *Serebrianyi Golub'*, in *Izbrannaiia proza*, p.22; 'оправдывал: плодом вдохновения пиита де не голые бабы, а богини... Но, спрошу я, какая такая разница между богиней и бабой? Богиня ли, баба ли - все одно: кем же, как не бабами, в древности сами богини были. Бабами, и притом пакостного свойства.'



the moment when her erotic beauty is earthly rather than divine. The heavenly muse falls to earth, comes alive, takes shape, to find herself a whore.<sup>833</sup> This impure erotic quality of the female form is a constant. The image of woman can be used symbolically to convey moral and aesthetic degeneracy. The image of woman becomes pornographic per se. This association in the physical image of woman can be used to convey an impression of degeneracy even when woman herself is absent. In other words, woman does not need to be there to be visible as a whore.

There are several contexts in which corruption is suggested by a symbolic pornography of the female form, which is apparently divorced from real, living woman. This is a common attitude in the toleration of pornography. In the belief that the images in pornography are not real women, or that if they are they are not in real situations, but acting, the use of the female form to convey eroticism is believed to have little to do with real women's experience. The pornography of the female form is a mask, and is recognizable as a mask, unreal, and therefore cannot possibly affect (masculinist) society's perception of real woman. The use of such masks in Finnish and Russian writing at the turn of the century demonstrates rather the reverse. In order to convey eroticism, particularly degenerate eroticism, the female form is essential precisely because the figure of woman, not heavenly abstract beauty but the real physical form of flesh and blood, is perceived as inherently pornographic. The more visible the woman, the more degenerate the eroticism. The examination of a number of works by male writers will reveal how the female image is used as a mask of pornography. As a counterbalance, Jotuni's story *Eriika* (1907) will show how this process directly affects woman's experience of her projected image.

#### 6.4.1 The Mask of Pornography

In Linnankoski's play *Ikuinen taistelu*, the author uses a number of 'masked' men and women to represent the spirits of Lucifer tempting Cain to commit an act of evil. In his study of the work, Werner Söderhjelm describes the scene as the temptation of Cain by Lucifer's 'mostly female servants representing different types of vices, recalling

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833 As seen in the previous chapter.



perhaps Dante's *Inferno*'.<sup>834</sup> Söderhjelm thus draws attention to the female rather than the male spirits in his desire to convey both evil and temptation, qualities implicit in the female form since our knowledge of Eve. Söderhjelm is actually mistaken however. Linnankoski's spirits are in fact dominated by men both in number and in number of lines of dialogue.<sup>835</sup>

It is difficult to say whether Söderhjelm has been revealingly inobservant or observant in his remark. It is true that Linnankoski has not numerically shown a bias for woman as an image of evil. What he has done, however, is to create a visually more charismatic and emphatic image of sensuality in the female spirits. The spirits are described, with their gender specified, in the stage direction footnotes of Act 1. Some of the men as well as the women have visually dramatic costumes, such as the fiery red and yellow figure of the male Tulipunainen, whose name means crimson and who represents 'Hate' or 'Anger'.<sup>836</sup> Nevertheless, the women's imagery is visually arresting in a specifically sensual manner. In the female spirit who has the most lines (and therefore stage presence) of all the spirits, Linnankoski deliberately plays on a familiar image of sexually related, female evil and temptation: Eve. The character Tāti Liero, who represents 'Treachery', has a woman's head and a serpent's body.<sup>837</sup> Her name also includes a reference to a worm (*liero*). The other female spirit with a central stage role is Hekumatar, whose name and function represent smouldering, sexual Lust. She is described as 'a young, magnificent woman almost naked with hair down to her knees like a gown'.<sup>838</sup> In Act 2 she holds the stage with a dance and song. These are the two most dominant female spirits. The third, without physical description, is Repokorva ('Fox-ear') representing 'Curiosity'.<sup>839</sup>

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834 Werner Söderhjelm, *Johannes Linnankoski: en finsk diktarprofil*, Helsingfors, 1918, p.62; 'mest kvinnliga tjänsteandar, representerande olika slags odygder, måhända med påminnelse från Dantes Inferno'.

835 There are seventeen male spirits who have fifty-seven lines between them, and eight female spirits with forty-five lines. Two characters, one male and one female, seem to have two names but the context indicates that they are the same. They are Tulipunainen, who is referred to as Punakeltainen, and Hekumatar who is called Apilankukka during her performance of a song and dance.

836 Linnankoski, *Ikuinen taistelu*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.1, p.46; 'Viha'.

837 *ibid.*, p.45; 'Kavaluus'.

838 *ibid.*, p.46; 'Sukuhimo', 'nuori, ihana nainen, miltei alaston, hiukset ulottuvat aina polviin vaipan tavoin'.

839 *ibid.*, p.45; 'Uteliaisuus'.



While the female figures signify Treachery, Lust and Curiosity, the male spirits who dominate the Act represent Pride, Conceit, Doubt, Hate, and Blasphemy. The pointedly sensual female presence therefore embodies the characteristics of Eve in her role as the temptation to the Fall. The male spirits reflect the elements of Cain's defiance of God's will and his determination to perform his own act of creation by inventing fire. More than simply muse to Cain's idea in this case, the feminine element is used to suggest the appeal of evil. The male spirits command the dialogue, the female the visual impression on stage. It is through the implication of an inherent pornography of the female form that evil becomes fused with desire (eroticism). It is this which Söderhjelm notices, whether intentionally or not. Thus he concludes that Lucifer's evil spirits are 'mostly female', a statement which is misleading, technically and literally, but then again not, metaphorically. The female form in *Ikuinen taistelu* is a metaphor for evil. It both provokes and symbolizes Cain's moral and creative degeneracy.

In Linnankoski's play, the feminine form exists as a supernatural image, which is distinguishable from the image of 'real' woman. The characters of Eve and Ada in the play are common stereotypes of ordinary, invisible woman: mother and wife respectively. In Sologub's novel *Melkii bes*, and Blok's drama *Roza i Krest* (1912, *The Rose and the Cross*, 1986) the authors use the idea of the feminine image to eroticize, in degenerate form, a masculine subject. Sologub does so literally with a mask, and Blok does so by analogy. The male image can be found in pornography not simply as woman's aggressor, but also as an image of sensuality in itself. Almost invariably however the sensualization of the masculine form where it is portrayed as the object of lust requires effeminization. Only this evokes the negative entity of lust unleashed. The positive, subjective role in the sex act, signifying control, aggression, healthy sexual need is marked by male virility. In Russian literature, several male protagonists who suffer from spiritual weakness (inability to take subjective control) also display feminine features in their physique. Where that weakness becomes a parasitical sensuality, there is an emphasis on stereotypical characteristics associated with women.

One example of this can be found in Blok's play *Roza i Krest*, in which the characterization of Aliscan, the young page who is Izora's lover, develops the impression of pornographic sensuality. The union between Aliscan and Izora represents artistic and spiritual emptiness.



Aliscan, image of constant sensuality, reflects Izora's final descent into carnality. Izora is the Rose, symbol of beauty but also ancient Christian symbol of carnality. In searching for the Cross, symbol of true art and true love, she struggles against the dangers of carnal excess inherent in her womanhood. By the end of the play she has failed. She rejects the dreams and phantoms of song (her muse-like relationship to poetry), and craves Aliscan's earthly hands and lips, telling him that:

Never before did your face  
Burn with such radiant beauty.<sup>840</sup>

Throughout the play Aliscan contrasts with the masculine figures of Gaetan and Bertrand. Gaetan is the genuine artist, whose advanced age, although it does not detract from his virility, removes the danger of 'base manly beauty'<sup>841</sup> Bertrand embodies faithful love, his physical presence enhanced by his knightly exploits with his sword.<sup>842</sup> The unhealthy sensuality of Aliscan is conveyed in his indulgence in his own physical form, for which Blok uses stereotypes of feminine delicacy combined with phallic imagery. In a monologue in Act 4 Scene 1, Aliscan reflects:

Should fingers as slender as these  
Encircle a lance's rough shaft?  
No, I was born for other things!  
In fortunate Arras, they say,  
Men are more gracious and manners more elegant!(...)  
Their ladies are skilled in courtly love!<sup>843</sup>

Aliscan looks at his reflection in the pool, and continues:

These lips' tender curve  
Is like Cupid's bow  
Or the scarlet lips of Isaure...  
Must I hide them under a mask of iron?  
Shall the rude iron of a sword's hilt  
Be permitted to mar this rosy nail?

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840 Blok, *Roza i Krest*, in *op.cit.*, p.241; 'В первый раз такой красотой / Лик твой горит.' Translation of this and all subsequent quotations from the play are from the version in Michael Green, ed. and trans., *The Russian Symbolist Theatre: An Anthology of Plays and Critical Texts*, Ann Arbor, 1986, pp.59-107.

841 *ibid.*, p.205; 'низкой мужскою красой'.

842 *ibid.*, e.g. pp.179-80 where he is shown to be brave and loyal.

843 *ibid.*, pp.224-25; 'Этим ли пальцам красивым сжимать / Губное древко конья? / Нет, не на то я рожден! - / Куда, говорят, в счастливом Аррасе / Вежливей люди, обычан тоньше и моды красивей! (...) / Дамы знают науку учтивой любви!'



No! For me, other men, other manners-  
Then many a nightingale-haunted night  
Would I pass with Isaure amid roses!..<sup>844</sup>

The use of the mirror motif, an element of sexual eye-symbolism, is widespread in the literature of this period to mark a woman's sexual discovery. Aliscan is explicitly identified not only with the feminine, but with Izora herself. At the end of Scene 3 he says to her:

A love sick Narcissus  
In your eyes I am mirrored...<sup>845</sup>

and:

What are the beauties of Arras  
Before the light in your eyes?!<sup>846</sup>

The comparison hints at her eventual pornography: these same beauties are those practised in 'courtly love'. The provocation to exhibit herself implicit in the eye and mirror motifs distresses Izora, as she attempts to resist this physical exposure:

(...) hide me  
From the gaze of vassal and guest.<sup>847</sup>

But her fate is predicted in an earlier comment by the First Juggler:

And that's how Narcissus gazed into the water and drowned.<sup>848</sup>

Water indicates Izora's sexual indulgence, drowning the false or wrong nature of that sexual experience. Izora submits to Aliscan, but in this submission she is seduced not by a man, not by masculine virility, which would suggest a healthy union of polarities. She is seduced by her own sexual desire, represented by Aliscan, who is no more than the mirror image in her eyes, and who in urging the exposure of her beauty suggests her own desire to display herself.

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844 *ibid.*, p.225; 'Эти нежные губы подобны / Прихотливому луку Амура, / Или - алым Изоры устам... / Их мне прятать под маской железной! / Этот розовый ноготь ломать / Рукою железной меча! - / Нет! Другие бы люди и моды, - / Проводил бы я в розах с Изорой / Не одну соловьиною ночь!..'

845 *ibid.*, p.235; 'Как Нарцисс влюбленный / Отражаюсь в ваших очах...'

846 *ibid.*, p.235; 'Что красавицы Арраса / Перед светом ваших очей!'

847 *ibid.*, p.235; 'закройте меня / От взоров гостей и вассалов...'

848 *ibid.*, p.235; 'А вот как Нарцисс смотрел в воду и утонул...'



Blok's development of Aliscan's character plays doubly on the implicit pornography of the female image. By effeminizing Aliscan Blok succeeds in conveying indiscriminate sensuality. By accentuating Aliscan's self-image as Izora, he succeeds in subtly pornographing Izora herself.

In Sologub's *Melkii bes*, femininity is manipulated to create a pornography symbolizing deviant sexuality and mental imbalance. The main protagonist of the novel, Peredonov, is a schoolteacher at a boys' school, who is gradually pushed towards mental and physical annihilation: paranoia and death. His main ideological antagonist is the young, hedonistic Liudmila, for whom there is 'happiness and wisdom only in madness'.<sup>849</sup>

The perverse psychology of both characters contains a fundamental current of sensuality within which a young schoolboy, Sasha, is sexually objectified. Sasha's objectification is developed through his gradual adoption of increasingly more feminine physical characteristics. Sasha's observable femininity not only turns him into the object of Peredonov's and Liudmila's fantasy worlds, but encourages their sexual obsession with him. Both characters depend on the effeminization of his image to heighten their erotic perception of the boy.

Early on, Peredonov's perverse sexuality is signalled in that his erotic fantasies are quickly replaced by fear.<sup>850</sup> In Chapter 11 he begins to take an interest in Sasha, one of his pupils whom he had never noticed previously. His interest begins when he becomes fixated with the idea that Sasha might be a girl in disguise, an idea which 'incited a lecherous curiosity in him'.<sup>851</sup> His conviction that Sasha is a girl propels him towards a frenzied determination to expose this fact. He makes various attempts to reveal his discovery to others, mostly men in positions of power.<sup>852</sup> Peredonov does not only require Sasha's effeminization to stimulate an erotic impulse, but the satisfaction of that impulse demands the public demonstration of the female Sasha. In Chapter 13, Peredonov tries to disclose the matter to the headmaster. The scene is rich in both sexual euphemism and explicitness, paralleling the reality of pornographic representation, hidden from polite society but sexually

849 Sologub, *Melkii bes*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.6, p.349; 'только в безумии счастье и мудрость'.

850 *ibid.*, p.56.

851 *ibid.*, p.148; 'зажег в нем блудливое любопытство'.

852 *ibid.*, e.g. Chap. 13.



graphic. Unable to confront the issue of Sasha being a girl Peredonov first makes a suggestion of a 'scandal at the gymnasium'.<sup>853</sup> He then explains that 'this wretch ought to have been sent to a boarding school without ancient languages,' a euphemism with a double meaning, since a girl's boarding school was itself a euphemism for a brothel.<sup>854</sup> The statement causes embarrassment and misunderstanding until Peredonov finally asserts bluntly that Sasha is a girl, adding, in the face of the headmaster's disbelief, that 'Depravity will begin in the gymnasium.'<sup>855</sup>

Peredonov fails to convince the officials that Sasha is a girl. He effectively fails to show men that Sasha is a whore. Liudmila, by contrast, succeeds in pornographing Sasha. Like Peredonov, Liudmila needs both to see and to show Sasha's femininity in order to achieve erotic stimulus and satisfaction. In the chapter directly following Peredonov's failure, Liudmila, intrigued by rumours, visits Sasha. Unlike Peredonov, she is not deluded. She objectifies Sasha into an image of femininity through another form of fantasy.

On their first meeting, Sasha is characterized in Liudmila's mind by familiar motifs of women in sensual imagery. They talk of modesty, he is embarrassed.<sup>856</sup> She notices his thick hair and eye-lashes.<sup>857</sup> The frequent mention of his dark eyes culminates in her 'sultry, African dreams' of his 'blue-black eyelashes, jealously covering his enchanting gaze'.<sup>858</sup> The dream sequence combines the fear-filled motif of sensuous exoticism with the metaphor of female attraction and modesty. Sasha is the object of flagellation in her erotic dream.

After this, Liudmila, who considers that 'The best age for boys (...) is fourteen or fifteen (...) they don't have a disgusting beard,' actively promotes Sasha's erotic femininity.<sup>859</sup> In Chapter 16, she covers Sasha in perfume and in Chapter 26, she dresses him up in her clothes. The process culminates in his complete pornography in Chapter 28 when he

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853 *ibid.*, p.170; 'в гимназии скандал'.

854 *ibid.*, p.170; 'эту тварь надо отправить в пансион без древних языков.' Note the use of the word 'тварь', which is feminine in gender and as an insult also carries the meaning of 'foetus' or 'abortion'.

855 *ibid.*, p.172; 'В гимназии развратъ начнется.'

856 *ibid.*, pp.181-82.

857 *ibid.*, p.183.

858 *ibid.*, p.189; 'знойные, африканские сны', 'синеvато-черные ресницы, ревниво закрывая их чарующий взор'.

859 *ibid.*, p.230; 'Самый лучший возраст для мальчиков (...) - четырнадцать - пятнадцать лет (...) нет бороды противной.'



will enter a masked ball successfully disguised as a geisha. The erotic significance of the scent (to which Peredonov incidentally is hostile) is explained in Chapter 17, where Liudmila's talk of the bees, flowers and sun describes nature in its mating season.<sup>860</sup> In Chapter 26, dressed as a woman, Sasha feels seduced by the 'sweet, languid odour of Japanese perfume'.<sup>861</sup> This is a clue to the subsequent geisha costume. Effeminized, eroticized, Sasha finishes as the image of an exotic prostitute.<sup>862</sup> The Japanese motif, part of wider anti-oriental motifs in Russian literature of this period, serves to vilify the image. Finally in Chapter 29 the transition is complete:

Sasha, intoxicated by his new position, flirted wildly. The more they thrust their tickets into the little geisha's hand, the more gaily and provocatively sparkled the eyes of the coquettish Japanese girl through the narrow slits in the mask.<sup>863</sup>

The tickets are votes for the costume, but the scenario clearly suggests payment. While Sasha the geisha, the institutionalized prostitute, is rewarded, another female contestant whose low-cut costume leaves little to the imagination is asked to cover herself or leave.<sup>864</sup> Grushina's nudity, without the necessary, frightening mystique which Barthes has identified in striptease, is considered scandalous. In moulding Sasha into an exotic prostitute by contrast, Liudmila has exploited the requirements of formalized sensuality in the feminine form to create the perfect pornography.

#### 6.4.2 Shattered Self-Image

Central to the pornography of the feminine form is the idea that it is divorced from true womanhood by virtue of the mask. The images are apparently distanced from reality by the element of the supernatural in

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860 *ibid.*, p.224.

861 *ibid.*, p.339; 'сладкою, томною, пряною, японскою функцией'.

862 The matter of whether the Japanese geisha is technically a prostitute or not is irrelevant here, as clearly she was and is perceived as such at least outside Japan. In any event, her function has sufficient parallel to symbolize prostitution: she is trained and paid to entertain men in private with her 'feminine' skills and charms, and is often a 'kept' lover without the respectable status of wife.

863 Sologub, *Melkii bes*, in *op.cit.*, p.378; 'Саша, опьяненный новым положением, кокетничал напрапалую. Чем больше в маленькую гейшину руку всовывали билетиков, тем веселее и задорнее блистали из узких прорезов в маске глаза и кокетливой японки.'

864 *ibid.*, p.377.



Linnankoski's work, the symbolic reflection in Blok's and the literal costume in Sologub's. At the turn of the century, despite enlightenend theories about women's sexuality, the existence and depiction of the essence of whore was not considered beyond the established order of things. In the moral and aesthetic debate on sexuality the psychological affects of pornographic objectification were not at issue. As with prositution, to obvious pornography offended against society's sense of decency, but not against individual rights.

One exceptional work, which does suggest the soul-destroying affects of woman's objectification, in art and life, is Jotuni's story *Eriika*. The story's focus on the subject of art is unusual in Jotuni's work. Far from a metaphysical study about the essential nature or role of art, the story deals with more tangible realities of art. It considers the affects of visual representation on the individual's self-image and relationship to society. Through the title heroine's experience as an artist's model, Jotuni makes the link between the social, economic and psychological aspects of the exploitation of woman's body in representative art. This is not a study of a muse as in L. Onerva's work, in which man's ideal of woman as a goddess of inspiration usurps woman's own creative identity. This is a more straightforward examination of the male artist's rights over woman's body and the psychological deterioration which results from her physical objectification.

The story opens with an insight into Eriika's feelings of reluctance to marry, despite family pressures on her to do so for economic reasons. Eriika feels unable and unwilling to do so. As the story unfolds it is revealed that her sense of identity has been shattered by the modelling work she undertook in the recent past. At the point in time when the story is set, she is struggling to regain her mental stability and sense of self.

Jotuni describes (almost prophetically) the consequences of pornography. Although the theme of love is also introduced, the story is not concerned with the problem of idealistic views of love versus the reality of marriage as in many other of Jotuni's works. The monetary and marital themes are closely interwoven here with the theme of Eriika's modelling experience. The sexual and pecuniary inevitability of Eriika's situation is revealed in the very structure of the story. A parallel is drawn between woman's image as a saleable commodity in art and in marriage. The relationship between artist and model in the story has



nothing to do with love. Like Eriika's own psychological development, it is rich in motifs which identify the scenario as the form and function of pornographic representation.

The modelling has taken its toll on Eriika's physical health. This is conveyed in terms reminiscent of the prostitute. Eriika 'had begun to look old and used. It was already more difficult to find a taker for her.'<sup>865</sup> The story is set at a dance where the atmosphere is pungent with the 'Smell of perfume, powder and naked flesh'.<sup>866</sup> Eriika is reminded that she should put on her face powder, particularly around her eyes.<sup>867</sup> The eyes are the familiar symbol of sexual knowledge, with powder as the prostitute's camouflage. Suffocating, almost fainting from the sensation of an unseen hand on her body, she pulls herself together to look for the mirror.<sup>868</sup> She begins to recall the period of her modelling, when the artist's gaze:

penetrated her heart, soul, body, everywhere. Before it she was nothing, before it she was forced to submit, to lay herself bare. She was not allowed to keep anything hidden, anything deeper inside, any sanctuary where the other one did not have the right to enter. How could she have been so wretched and helpless, and how could she have simply craved, craved to throw herself under that gaze to be raped by it?<sup>869</sup>

The inevitable and absolute submission to the artist's gaze fosters an inescapable need to be possessed. Eriika's desire to submit is not portrayed as an inherent feminine attribute. It expresses a Freudian conflict in woman's psychology: the need to find an active role, to be a subject, when society casts her as a passive object. Jotuni makes Eriika recognize this condition as an 'illness' resulting from her experience.<sup>870</sup> Although for Eriika there is no longer an alternative, Jotuni did not regard the pattern of the relationship as the one and only established order of things. The paragraph concludes with the question:

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865 Jotuni, *Eriika*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.1, p.183; 'alkoi näyttää kuluncelta ja vanhalta. Häntä oli vaikeampi jo kaupaksi saada.'

866 *ibid.*, p.185; 'Hajuvesien, puuterin ja paljaan ihon tuoksu'.

867 *ibid.*, p.185.

868 *ibid.*, p.186.

869 *ibid.*, pp.186-87; 'tunki hänen sydämeensä, sieluunsa, ruumiiscensa, kaikkialle. Sen edessä ei Eriika ollut mitään, sen edessä täytyi hänen alistua, ja paljastua. Hänellä ei saanut olla mitään peitettävää, ei mitään sisimpää, ei pyhäkköä, jonne sillä toisella ei olisi ollut oikeutta astua. Kuinka hän oli ollut kurja ja voimaton ja kuinka hän vain himoitsi, himoitsi heittäytyä sen katseen raiskattavaksi?'

870 *ibid.*, p.188; 'sairautta'.



Perhaps the other one only used her for his work. Used his power, as he could. Was that right?<sup>871</sup>

After the artist's departure Eriika feels she has regained her life, her self. Unable to bear the thought of once again becoming a possession, she breaks off her engagement.<sup>872</sup> Eriika has discovered the personal cost of sexual possession as it is encouraged by the pornography of woman's representation, and realizes the parallel with accepted social custom. Despite her recognition of this process, Eriika is unable completely to escape the consequences of her experience:

Her nerves were so worn that she had not yet been fully able to free herself from it. Lately, she had been fighting against it with the strength of all her soul. She must become heathly and whole again, although all was shattered and in pieces.<sup>873</sup>

The fragmentation implicit in this imagery reflects the sensation of mutilation, of body and soul, which is a recognizable female response to the reality and the depiction of sexual possession. Jotuni shows not only that Eriika is a casualty because she is the individual, the real woman, used, but that all women are subliminally subjected to the idealization of themselves as whores raped by the gaze of men. Eriika becomes conscious of the reality of this scenario in the social situation. Eriika is not in a brothel. She is at a dance. Yet to her it seems like the false male-female interaction of the brothel, in which all women are objects available for sexual possession. Eriika's discovery is a cruel knowledge, as all self-discovery for women in Jotuni's work. Eriika possesses valuable insight. She perceives what others do not: 'that life is not anything close to that which it seems to be';<sup>874</sup> but she must either conform to the semblance of life, to don the powdered mask, or remain an outsider.

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871 *ibid.*, p.187; 'Kenties tarvitsi toinen häntä vain työtänsä varten. Käytti valtaansa, kun voi. Oliko se oikein?'

872 *ibid.*, p.188.

873 *ibid.*, p.188; 'Hänen hermonsa olivat niin ärsyytyneet, ettei hän vielä kokonaan ollut voinut vapautua siitä. Hän oli viime aikoina taistellut koko sielunsa voimalla. Hänen täytyi tulla terveeksi ja kokonaistua, vaikka kaikki oli särkynyttä ja repaleista.'

874 *ibid.*, p.189; 'ettei elämä ole läheskään sitä, miltä se näyttää'.



### 6.5 Woman's Desire to Submit: A Pornography of Female Sacrifice

In Jotuni's story, the heroine's sense of fragmentation is the destructive consequence of her representation. The draining force of that representation is its cultivation of her own craving 'to throw herself under the gaze'. While Jotuni attributes this to the nature of representation, the sexual submission is more often seen as an instinctive attribute of the female psyche. While prostitution was deplored, while free choice in love was advocated, writers persistently portrayed woman's sexual nature as the longing to be forced into sexual relations. It was not simply that woman should and could make herself available, with no sexual self-knowledge, to the man who loves her correctly, as in Gor'kii's and Kianto's work. Moreover, woman's own passions, her own sexual identity, were awakened by masculine force, be that insistence, beating, rape or murder.

The theory is that woman's nature is to be a willing participant in her rape or murder because it credits her desirability. The male force exercised on her will and her body provides her with an identity. Prior to this she is invisible, another negative. This is a paradigm for male-female relations used in both Finnish and Russian writing of the period, in works which contain either explicit or implicit studies of woman's metaphysical sexual energy. In Russian literature, the indignant portrayal of male brutality and terror against women exists alongside the conviction of women's desire to be forced. In Finnish literature, the suggestion of woman's need to take control of her own fate does not detract from the conviction that women choose to be forced. Even today, the pattern of male aggression and female submission is seen as the normal condition of human interaction. At the turn of the century it was a key feature of attitudes about woman's sexuality.<sup>875</sup>

The pattern includes the presumption that woman's submission represents her active choice, no matter what the extent of duress involved. Despite the widespread condemnation of the exploitation of women in prostitution, there remained a conviction that most women had a choice in their destiny. In Russia, documentation of prostitutes' own explanations of how and why they began in the profession imply

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<sup>875</sup> See e.g. Edvard Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage*, London, 1891, which is representative of its times in this respect.



free will at least as often as economic need.<sup>876</sup> Studies of prostitutes in medical reports and women's journals suggest quite the opposite.<sup>877</sup> Likewise in Finland, serious efforts were made to apportion blame to the woman herself for becoming a prostitute, for example through her taste for alcohol, even when the social inequalities which maintained the institution of prostitution were recognized and criticized.<sup>878</sup>

In literature erotic overtones are present in woman's complicity in putting her body at the disposal of men. The erotic depiction of the 'voluntarily' forced woman is the aspect of erotica which cannot excuse itself by either aesthetics or morality. Significantly, it is a key feature of modern pornography.<sup>879</sup> This fetishistic prejudice over women's sexuality is exploited in representations of the feminine impulse.

The numerous misogynistic killings of Tolstoi's late work, the sexual molestations in Gor'kii's work and the brutal rapes of Bunin's peasant descriptions, are preserved (perhaps) from the sensation of voyeurism by the moral message they contain. Tolstoi's remorse, Gor'kii's didacticism, and Bunin's naturalism suspend the reader's horror at the physical abuse of women. Male physical assault on women is, after all, no fantasy. Women writers like Talvio, Kallas and Canth in Finland are also intent on exposing this element of women's experience, though their work contains neither the paternalism nor the complacency of male descriptions. There is a noticeable difference in the angle of perception. Talvio, Kallas and Canth recognize violence against women for what it is: an act by an individual man with physical and social power over an individual woman, sanctioned and cultivated by the institutionalized control of men collectively over women collectively. By contrast, there is an impression of universal

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876 Stites, *Prostitute and Society*, p.352. In his analysis of this documentation Stites himself concludes that many women 'chose' this way of life, but also asks 'how great was the range and quality of their "choices"?' He states that some women 'chose suicide rather than the streets' and describes the nature of their alternatives: 'Death in the icy waters of Mojka Canal (...), sweated labor in a sewing shop, menial domestic service, hard labor in a textile mill, the uncertainty of unemployment.' (p.353.) In view of this assessment the word 'choice' may be seen as a misrepresentation.

877 See e.g. E.S. Drentel'n, *O prostitutsii s točki zreniia dinamiki zhizni*, Moscow, 1908. The author points out that the view that prostitutes have an inclination for the work stems from attitudes about woman's inclination to passivity (p.23) and the belief that respectable women would be driven to suicide by shame (p.24). Examples of articles in women's journals include the anonymous 'Pis'mo prostitutki' (*Soiuz zhenshchin*), April 1909, pp.9-11).

878 See e.g. Th. Rhein, 'Prostitutsioonikysymys' (*Valvoja*, 8, 1888, p.531), or Mikael Johnsson, 'Alkoholikysymys' (*Valvoja*, 9, 1889, p.209).

879 Dworkin, *Pornography*, pp.129-98.



inevitability in the works of Tolstoi, Gor'kii and Bunin. Women may not be directly compliant in their assault, but they are equally to blame by their provocation or by the condition of life they 'accept' (by not choosing suicide).

Even with the moral dimension, male writers cultivate therefore a dimly perceivable trace of female complicity in their own assault, in which violence becomes linked with morbid sexuality. This was not considered obscene however, because the motif of female self-sacrifice itself was a powerful model of both moral and aesthetic purity. This energy of feminine self-sacrifice was transferred on to a picture of woman's willing collaboration in the violence done to her.

The eroticization of woman craving her own assault is the ultimate pornography, because in that craving she wants to be used (vocational whore) and the erotic motifs demonstrate it (depiction). This understanding of female sexuality is more extreme than the views of obscenity, and helps to elucidate the origins of that obscenity. Woman, the female form, represents the threat of subversion, expressed as a degenerate sexuality which must be controlled. The images of women created by Linnankoski, Blok and Sologub act as a warning that the masculine order can be undermined by a force as perverse as it is female. In Eriika's acquired consciousness, Jotuni presents the true potential for rebellion.

Two of the most lucid examples of a pornography of female sacrifice are Andreev's satire *Prekrasnye sabiniaki* and Linnankoski's play *Jeftan tytär*. Both plays use their legendary theme to channel feminine submissive impulse into the issue of national loyalties. Andreev's Sabine women are raped and Linnankoski's Jephtah's daughter is sacrificed (murdered). The significance of the plays has less to do with women than with national politics and individual will. Both authors retell their tale with an emphasis on the eroticism of women's bodily assault. This becomes veiled by the context of the topic, because women's sexuality is not discussed here. Just as the feminine form can be associated *per se* with obscenity, woman's desire to be forced is a given quality of her sexuality. It is so universally accepted as fact that it can be used on a symbolic level.

In Andreev's *Prekrasnye sabiniaki*, it is the women who appear to have the power. It is they who issue demands in the first and last scene. They acquire this power through their willingness to be abducted. The



illusion that they possess a degree of influence stems from their acceptance of the idea of their womanhood as it is recognized by the men who rape them. The Sabine men fail to win their women back because they will not employ force, not even once the Romans are ready to capitulate. The Sabine women are recognized to exist only insofar as they are useful to men sexually and physically. The rape of woman is the ultimate sign that she exists sexually because she is desired. In reality, the rape equals male dominance of woman. In the male power system, even this control is not of itself an achievement, since women are of no value (negative) in themselves. Essential to the significance of rape is the fact that these women belong to another group of men. Only in this is the dominance meaningful, as it establishes a power hierarchy between men, who are of value (positive). In this power system which barter women's bodies, the women are duped into believing that man's desire to rape is a sign of female dominance.

This pattern of normalized sexual relations is contrasted with the failure of two characters, Veronika and Pavel, to perform the ritual of male possession of the female. Veronika has fallen in love with Pavel, and wants actively to belong with him. She does not want to belong to Pavel through rape. By the end of Act 1, this makes her the wrong woman for Pavel, Veronika reveals that her former husband also complained for thirty years that she was the wrong one for him.<sup>880</sup> Veronika's role is significant because she appears to be the one who is most submissive, with the least power: she is willing to go to Pavel. Her powerlessness is only real if the reader accepts the precepts of the male system as it is expressed in the rape ritual. Recognition of the power of the other Sabine women as a deception exposes the fact that Veronika is the only one who actually makes a choice of her own. She acquires the power to define her own needs. In her attempt to add her definition to her relationship, she loses the reward of being loved (raped) by Pavel.

Andreev's play manipulates an erotic fantasy of woman's desire to be forced as a code of social behaviour. In Linnankoski's play, a model for social behaviour is manipulated into an erotic fantasy. The play's theme, the model of virginal sacrifice, has captured the male imagination since Euripides' Iphigenia. Jephtah's daughter is sacrificed to the Gods of Israel because of a vow made by her father. She herself agrees to her sacrifice, as though she had a choice, although it is made

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880 Andreev, *Prekrasnye sabiniaki*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol.15, p.69.



clear that the male pledge to the (male) Gods cannot be countersaid. She has no identity of her own, but is promised immortality in the fame she will acquire by her death.

Throughout the play, Hagar's virginal sexuality is played upon to evoke an erotic link between her death and the idea of her sexual consummation. The mention of her recent blossoming into the image of her mother underlines her newly acquired womanhood as well as her identity as her father's sexual property.<sup>881</sup> She herself is waiting to be reunited with her beloved Elieser. He tries to save her from her fate, offering her the choice of elopement with him. The scenes between Hagar and Elieser develop her image as a virgin on the threshold of becoming a bride. Erotic in her sexual purity, at no time does Jephthah's daughter control her body. Her father's promise makes her his property. Elieser tries to save her because he feels she belongs only to him, and she herself feels 'as though something inside of me...already belongs...to the Lord...'<sup>882</sup>

The erotic imagery is made complete by 'poetic' modifications of the biblical story.<sup>883</sup> There is a confusion between her feelings for Elieser and her father.<sup>884</sup> Indeed, as she awaits her father it is Elieser who arrives first.<sup>885</sup> There is deliberate emphasis on the power that Jephthah's vow gave to his sword.<sup>886</sup> His daughter understands that her sacrifice was planned, as a wedding is planned, bearing all the significance of a ritual rather than of a chance promise.<sup>887</sup> She even faints from ecstasy as the man whose bride she would have been also accepts her sentence of death.<sup>888</sup>

The men of the play, in their attempts to resolve their problems with human and divine power, exploit her body completely. Like the Sabine women, Jephthah's daughter is a symbol within a power struggle in which she herself represents nothing - it is the act of bartering her which bears significance. Like the Sabine women, she is deceived into believing that this power of men to dispose of her body confers a power on her. Her sacrifice, touching for her willingness, is actually only

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881 Linnankoski, *Jefthan tytär*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.560.

882 *ibid.*, p.605; 'niinkuin jotain minussa...kuuluisi...jo Herralle...'

883 The story of Jephthah's vow is recounted in Judges 11: 29-40.

884 Linnankoski, *Jefthan tytär*, in *op.cit.*, Vol.2, p.554-55.

885 *ibid.*, p.582.

886 *ibid.*, p.585.

887 *ibid.*, p.593.

888 *ibid.*, p.618.



meaningful because the men give up their right to her sexuality. Her resemblance to her mother, her role as Elieser's betrothed, her retreat with the girl-friends of her youth before her death, all serve to accentuate her transition from virginity into womanhood through death.

In Linnankoski's play, as in Andreev's, the moral and artistic frame bears no relevance to the erotic rape/murder with regard to woman's identity, which is not at issue. The frame codifies woman's willingness to participate in her own destruction. Moreover, it eroticizes that willingness. It is not simply that women are raped and a virgin is sacrificed. It is not even simply that women are raped and like it and that a virgin is sacrificed with her consent. It is that, in addition to this, the plays establish the social and erotic desirability of these phenomena. In the Sabine women's loyalty to their Roman rapists lies a moral of universal order. The killing of Jephtah's daughter is an emotive model of national and divine purpose. Women's sexual assault is a rite of passage which ensures the preservation of the status quo.



## 7 CONCLUSION

The prose and drama of the turn of the century in Finland and Russia offer a wealth of material which invites investigation into the ideals of womanhood they reflect. The conditions of the day in these two countries make such an investigation all the more pertinent because the philosophy of women's liberation was closely linked to the philosophy of revolutionary change. Women played an important role in the Russian radical movement and in the emergence of a Finnish national consciousness. In literature, the concepts of the 'new woman' and the 'eternal feminine' emerged alongside themes of political and artistic rebirth.

Writers examined the contemporary feminist issues of education and employment. Women's emotional life came under scrutiny in the debate over what social role was best suited to them. Literary models were created of active women participating in the shaping of their country's future. Thus a type of enlightened heroine, 'the new woman', made her appearance. At the same time, the 'eternal feminine' became an abstract defining principle of the universe, influencing each country's spiritual direction. In 1910, writing about Belyi's *Serebrianyi golub'*, Nikolai Berdiaev described the feminine 'elemental force' of Russian culture.<sup>889</sup> Finnish writers such as Aho, Kianto and Leino felt they were serving a 'goddess' of Finnish culture.<sup>890</sup>

As themes in the search for a new society and a new form of art, woman's role and the feminine spirit were both strongly associated with national ideology. For this reason, as shown in Chapter One, writers' views of women's issues were coloured by national concerns. In Finland, women's education was portrayed as a positive element in the general enlightenment of the Finnish population, a necessity in the development towards independence. In Russia, women's education was seen as yet another ineffectual measure which could not begin to satisfy

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889 See Nikolai Berdiaev, 'Russkii soblazn - Po povodu "Serebriianogo golubia" A. Belogo' (*Ruskaia Mysl'*, 11, 1910, pp.9-20).

890 See *Kuinka meistä tuli kirjailijoita: suomalaisten kirjailijoiden nuoruudenmuistelmia*, Helsinki, 1916.



the demand for personal freedom under the existing form of autocratic government. Similarly, in both countries, the theme of women's role in the economic structure drew parallels with the relationship of the individual to the state.

In themes of Russian radicalism and Finnish national resistance, the female was an element of the revolutionary process. But to what extent did the portrayal of woman and her essential nature suggest the possibility for a new social equality or future universal unity? Women's specific needs in education and employment were often obscured by the wider issue of radical reform. Indeed, in many cases the female theme offered writers a way out of their revolutionary vision. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, Gor'kii's and Kianto's challenge to the establishment preserved the one social construct which protected conservative values: the subordinate role of woman to man. The ideology of woman as wife and mother not only failed to reform the institution of marriage, but reinforced the concepts of marriage and family as a nuclear model for the ideal state. Whatever other political rebirth may have been imagined, the patriarchal order withstood the challenge of the 'new woman'.

It can be inferred that, despite the bid for individual freedom, it was necessary to continue to exercise male control over woman. This conclusion is further supported by the analysis in Chapter Three of the theme of woman's silence, particularly in the work of Andreev and Jotuni. The expression of women characters in Andreev's plays and stories reveals the author's consciousness of woman as a potential threat to universal and social order. Woman's nature is her silence, and the release of her voice is nature's revenge on man for his complacent 'civilization'. Jotuni's use of dialogue, on the other hand, suggests that it is precisely patriarchal control which silences and isolates woman. By insisting on her own definition of the world around her, woman can undermine patriarchy and acquire the freedom of self-knowledge. Even if this brings with it a new kind of isolation - the isolation of independence - it also contains the true potential for radical social reorganization.

Just as the traditional, patriarchal hierarchy determined the extent of political change, patriarchal values in aesthetics governed the process of artistic rebirth. The liberal reassessment of sexual difference upheld the one system of principles which conditioned attitudes about gender



identities in creativity: masculine positivity and feminine negativity. This system encouraged the established belief in woman's intrinsic passivity, which bore implications for woman's own creative identity. As seen in Chapter Four, women writers were criticized for their gender. Gippius and Kallas were given favourable reception by having 'masculine' credentials bestowed on their art. Moreover, 'masculine' (=true) art was identified with a universality which could only be expressed through the heroic and epic-like tradition. Thus critics endeavoured to perceive Chekhov's universal vision according to these values, although his work was lyrical and non-heroic. Chekhov succeeded in giving voice to women characters, which must be seen as a contributory factor in the uneasy interpretation of his work. Chekhov's style and subject did not conform to the tradition. More than any other Russian writer of the period, it was Chekhov who presented a challenge to the establishment in both politics and art. His work questions both the accepted social system and the nature of the literary tradition. In the same way, women writers in Finland represent the real break from the established literary tradition by their description of women's experience. This element of their work was largely ignored, a strategy by which they were included in the canon. By no means uniform in their choice of genre, style or subject matter, women writers displayed one common characteristic. They rejected society's definition of woman. Talvio, Canth and Jotuni all questioned woman's role in the structure of the state. L. Onerva, in particular, also discussed woman's role as an artist and criticized accepted notions of feminine beauty in symbolist art.

Although symbolist writers proclaimed a universal spiritual unity based on masculine and feminine principles, their cult of the 'eternal feminine' in effect worked against such a vision. As explained in Chapter Five, the muse extolled by the artist was no more than a facet of the male psyche. In art, women continued to be objects 'created' by a male subject. In the philosophy of androgynous dualism, the feminine was not only subordinate to the masculine, but represented total void. Blok's and Leino's theories of aesthetics assured the dominance of masculine order, for the release of the feminine marked the onset of chaos. The equation of femaleness with negativity also influenced the portrayal of woman's sexuality as potentially dangerous and inherently pornographic, as illustrated by the examples in Chapter Six. In erotic art, women were not shown to desire sex, but to enjoy being desired. This



was a pattern which ensured that woman's own sexual impulse, perceived as intrinsically destructive, could be contained.

The turn of the century marked an unprecedented prominence of female characters in Finnish and Russian literature. In Finland, women also established themselves as leading figures in the literary canon. Yet the liberal, anti-establishment ideology which cleared the way for women did not succeed in changing fundamental traditional beliefs in woman's subordinate role and in the deviant character of the feminine. The portrayal of woman in the context of political and artistic rebirth is characterized by the recurrent feature of man's desire to restrain woman. The female was a subversive element. The control of woman functioned as the safety valve on the destructive force of change.

The comparative methodology of this study reveals that images of women are not peripheral to the canon by any means, but often help to sustain it. The female angle enables the reevaluation of certain literary assumptions. Gor'kii no longer appears to be such a radical, while Chekhov emerges as the true subversive. In Finland, the presence of women writers was not the result of a more enlightened society, as Finnish women writers were censured for their gender as much as Russian women writers. In Symbolism, the universality of the androgynous spirit is questionable. By emphasizing the importance of the national context in the comparison, this examination shows that the limitations of political-aesthetic ambitions were defined by their basis in each country's form of patriarchal tradition. Maintaining woman in her traditional social place and cultivating taboos of essential femininity kept the revolutionary aspirations of progressive thought in check.



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